THE MULTIPLICATION OF AGENCIES AND THE MEANING OF MISSIONS

Wilbert R. Shenk

There has been a steady growth in the number of Christian agencies since World
War II. A recent survey shows 257 new mission-related agencies established
1940-69 in North America compared with 126 for the period 1910-39.*   The
tabulation by decade is as follows:

Decade of Founding	Agencies Founded
1970-72	22
1960-69	34
1950-59	103
1940-49	70
1930-39	46
1920-29	42
1910-19	38
1900-09	27
Pre-1900	76

Nearly all Christian denominations had formed their missionary societies before
1940. The majority of agencies founded since then have been independent, i.e.,
nondenominational or interdenominational, missions or agencies dedicated to
specialized ministries. These statistics do not tell the entire story.
Within existing organizations there has been similar growth by adding depart-
ments or modifying old ones to perform new functions. Christians have had
little hesitation in appropriating modern technology for Christian purposes
and in organizing necessary structures.

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*Edward R. Dayton (ed.), Mission Handbook: North American Protestant Ministries
Overseas. Monrovia, California: Missions Advanced Research and Communication
Center (for Missionary Research Library), 1973, 88.

Mennonites have been active participants in this growth both as denominations and on an inter-Mennonite basis. A recent analysis identified 50 boards, committees and groups formed to serve a wide range of inter-Mennonite interests. This says nothing of the parallel intra-denominational developments. It is not my purpose to document the extent of this growth (for which new data need to be gathered). I want to point out certain tensions and ambiguities produced by such growth. These uncertainties influence our basic understandings of function and purpose, especially as this concerns the church's missionary task.

The majority of these new agencies are task-oriented. Rather than being organized on the basis of a grand concept of the church's ministry or a clearcut polity, the initiative has typically come spontaneously from a particular episode. A concerned individual or small group sees a need and organizes a response. Questions about long-term viability, whether existing organizations are already performing this service or could be modified to do so and whether this activity meets with more general brotherhood approval, are generally ignored.

In a time of dynamic change with relatively ample resources, the creation of new agencies can occur with few questions being raised. This tendency is reinforced by our culture which lauds private enterprise as one of the highest virtues. The failure to ask questions may also be due to a basic unfriendliness among church staff toward new ideas which originate outside official channels. In other words, if the only way to win legitimation for an idea within the church is to take it to program agencies, but the staff resents non-staff initiative, the concerned member may justifiably feel frustrated in trying to share an idea with the church. Within the brotherhood neither extreme or unbridled individualism nor staff monopoly is desirable. The church ought to be a community in which creativity is welcomed and put to work without needless overlapping or noncooperation.

Such institutional growth inevitably introduces tensions and changes the character of the church. There are eight points related to this process and its impact on our understanding of mission which I wish to note.

1. This process tends to alter the meaning of mission to make it more inclusive. Within missionary circles the transition has been from "missions" to "ministries." The slogan "the church is mission" epitomizes this evolution. The result is that the definition of mission has become increasingly meaningless. The term "ministries" now encompasses all of the activities associated with world mission. If the term is intended to describe all that the church is attempting to do, it is accurate. To equate "ministries" with "mission" only obscures the meaning of each. It is biblically unjustified and as a functional guide impracticable.

    For two decades concerned missionary statesmen of the rank of R. Pierce Beaver, Max Warren, Lesslie Newbiggin and Stephen Neill have criticized this careless use of language. They correctly sensed that the ultimate effect was to devalue mission. This is done both by formally redefining mission to mean something new as well as by revisions in practice.

The information in the 1973 Mission Handbook was gathered through a questionnaire circulated to each North American Protestant agency engaged in some overseas ministry. Each agency was asked to specify its primary task or tasks. These run to a total of 58 categories as follows:

Adoption Programs
Agricultural Assistance
Aid/Relief
Aviation
Bible Distribution
Bible Memorization
Bible Reading
Broadcasting (Radio/TV)
Child Welfare
Church Building Financing
Church Construction
Church Planting/Establishment
Community Development
Computer/Data Processing Service
Correspondence Courses
Deaf/Blind Ministries
Education, Extension
Education, General Christian
Education, Missionary
Education, Secular
Education, Theological
Evangelism, Mass
Evangelism, Personal/Small Group
Evangelism, Saturation
Evangelism, Student
Fund Raising
Fund Transmittal
Furloughed Missionary Support
Information Service

Linguistics
Literacy
Literature Distribution
Literature Production
Management Consulting
Medical Supplies
Medical, including Dental and Public Health
Ministry to Seamen
Missionary Orientation and Training
Motion Pictures
Orphanage/Child Care
Prison Ministry
Psychological Counseling
Purchasing Service
Recording
Recruiting
Reference Board
Research, Mission Related
Self-Help Projects
Serving Missionaries
Serving Other Agencies
Summer Camps
Supplying Equipment
Support of Nationals
Support of National Church
Technical Assistance
Training
Translation, Bible
Translation, Other

As a testimony to the growing sophistication, specialization and differentiation of modern missions, the list is impressive. As a guide to what exactly the focus of the missionary task is today, it is bewildering. This in no sense disparages any activity on the list. All have their legitimate places. I am only asking whether all of this helps us to get a clear notion of what our missionary task is. To press the question further, I calculated which categories got the largest number of responses. The top nine in order of rank were:

> Evangelism, Personal
> Literature Distribution
> Church Planting/Establishment
> Education, General Christian
> Education, Theological
> Medical, Dental, Public Health
> Broadcasting
> Support of Nationals
> Support of National Church

It must be remembered that this is an imperfect index. This does not relate total financial outlay and number of personnel assigned to each of these activities. This is based entirely on the number of agencies engaged in each activity. Neither can we assume that there is general agreement as to what is meant by such a term as "Church Planting" and "Church Establishment." It does tell something, however, about the emphasis and trends. Two major U.S. denominations, for example, with substantial missions budgets and personnel did not regard church planting to be one of their primary tasks on the basis of their response to the questionnaire.

2. <u>This process increases the possibility of confusing what is primary with what is secondary</u>. This problem is not unique to the church or church agencies, but it can be illustrated from missionary history. In the 19th century the dominant slogan was "Christianity, Commerce and Civilization." Westerners were generally convinced of the absolute superiority of western culture, and many believed in the total depravity of nonwestern cultures. The missionary mandate was assumed to include the call to "civilize" the heathen as preparation for evangelizing them. Civilization was considered both a condition as well as an inducement for becoming Christian. Christianity was believed to be based on a religious conversion but involved this larger cultural change as well. The economic concept of free enterprise was the prevailing doctrine of the day, and commerce was a natural ally in the extension of Christian civilization.

It is quite inappropriate for our generation to criticize the Victorians for their view of the world. It is important that we see the way they created certain problems as the result of assumptions. "Saving the world" meant for them individual conversion to Christ plus creating a Christian civilization. To be properly civilized, people must also be literate and emulate Christian (i.e., western) civilization. Missionaries set up schools, agricultural programs, economic activities and finally medical services. This was all legitimate activity. In time, however, it became very difficult for missions to keep the evangelizing/church planting in a priority position. This is a point of constant tension in the policies and administration of leaders such as Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn.

3. <u>This process creates the problem of hierarchy in value</u>. To place emphasis on one ministry or another suggests it has greater value. The democratic solution is to either stop making such comparisons or give everyone the same designation. The church in modern times has finally recovered the insight that mission is central to the very existence of the church. Emil Brunner summed it up in the aphorism, "The church exists by mission as fire exists by burning." The obvious answer is that everything the church does is mission. But where is the biblical basis for this practical conclusion?

4. <u>This process releases bureaucratic and institutional egos to exert powerful influence</u>. The more highly organized the church becomes, the more bureaucracy necessarily plays a part in patterns of work and relationship. Bureaucracies are conservative, self-justifying and self-perpetuating. There is a constant danger of the staff becoming autonomous and the board of control a mere figurehead. A brotherhood that has dozens of these

bureaucracies organized to do various tasks must expect that there will be tensions and even some competition. The church must be on the alert for these tendencies and make sure that agencies remain subservient to the larger brotherhood and not become a law unto themselves.

5. This process contributes to insecurity about our own tradition. This generation of Mennonites seems torn between feeling guilty for being a minority group and taking pride in its heritage. This is illustrated by the endless discussions over the relation between mission and service and word and deed. Above all else we want to avoid identifying with the error of Fundamentalists who reject Christian service as a part of the church's responsibility. Neither are we comfortable with a humanistic position which makes service to man ultimate. It is quite possible that the basis of this insecurity on this issue--and others--is not theological at all but can be traced to less lofty sources.

6. In this process ambiguity arises from lack of constitutional definition. All official agencies become legal corporations. This requires a formal statement of purpose. Generally this has been done only in relation to the objects of a particular agency. What has been lacking is a corresponding delineation of each agency's relationships to other boards and committees in the brotherhood. Without a hierarchy or central church judicatory, it is more difficult to develop such a broader constitutional concept. To some extent the recent Mennonite Church reorganization dealt with the problem for major program boards. This is not the full extent of the problem, however.

The importance of an adequate constitutional definition arises from the fact that real freedom and security depend on such an authoritative demarcation of responsibility. The instinctive reaction of most people is to avoid ground rules or legal restraints. In a well-ordered society the effect of sound laws is just the opposite. Law is not inimical to brotherhood. It is basic to productive relationships.

7. This process reminds us that we have not yet fully come to terms with the meaning of interchurch relationships. In the previous point we noted that only some program boards now have constitutions that relate them in a clear-cut manner to parallel agencies in the denomination. The problem is easily solved for an agency created by several autonomous denominations, each of which cedes to it varying degrees of responsibility and with various views of its purposes. Such an agency may feel it has a very tenuous existence.

8. This process creates ambivalence over the role of the specialist agency. At what point should a specialized agency be formed instead of lodging new functions with an existing organization? The specialist agency develops great expertise in doing only one or a few things. However, the specialist may also have a narrower view of the church and its total program and purposes. The promotion of a narrowly defined program is easier than a more diffuse or all-inclusive one because its purposes are precise and compact. The continued formation of these specialist agencies during the past 30 years shows the appeal they can have to supporters. All of this poses a threat to boards which have much broader program responsibility.

There is every likelihood that new agencies will continue to be formed. Problems are not likely to get less complex. Tensions will not likely reduce. We examine the question here because of the impact this organizational evolution has had on our understanding of mission. Both domestic and international ministries of the church have been greatly expanded. This has been a healthy thing in many respects, but it has not occurred without strain. We must clarify our understandings of mission without setting agency against agency. The starting point should be biblical-theological rather than bureaucratic.

1. The Bible uses various metaphors to describe the church: body, people, community, etc. Each of these combines corporateness with individual integrity, singularity of purpose with coordinated functioning. The church is a community of gifts (Rom. 12:4-8, I Cor. 12-14, Eph. 4:1-16). This has meaning for both individual and the church agency. The church is more than the sum of its parts. The church is designed to play a central role in God's plan for the redemption of mankind. The church does not exist for itself but as a "living sacrifice."

    In this larger sense the gifts which comprise the church contribute to the mission or purpose of the church. This does not mean the church moves forward in confusion because each member is compelled to do everything and become a church in miniature. A strategy is implied in the distribution of gifts which ensures that the interior needs of the community will be met while it also ministers the Word to the world.

2. There is a rational division of labor which replaces competition with complementarity. I Cor. 12 shows that interdependence is the hallmark of Christian reality. Strong individualism and self-sufficiency are inimical to the body of Christ. Because there is interdependence each member is supported in the exercise of his gift for building up the whole rather than seeking to fulfill himself as an individual. This principle applies both to the person and the agency.

3. The church is freed to function as a community rather than as either a hierarchy or a series of independent units. The spirit of community is sullied when we begin assigning differing spiritual values to the various gifts. Maturity, insight and spiritual gift are not equivalent to commitment to Jesus Christ. The witness of the community of faith is dependent on the wholehearted consecration of all members.

    The emphasis must be maintained on this maximum challenge to self-giving rather than scaling down standards either for membership or commissioning to a particular task. Such a spirit cannot be cultivated merely by oral statements of commitment but it grows out of profound worship. The spirit of our age--especially as reflected in humanistic psychology--places human self-fulfillment at the center of existence.

    Far too much of the church's attempt at worship today is at the shrine of self-fulfillment. This is a reversion to paganism. The mystery and righteousness of God in Jesus Christ judges all our self-expression as the egoism which it is. Only the new creation is genuine community because it alone offers a viable basis for communal solidarity.

4. Within the "community of gifts" there is a specific apostolic ministry. Our review here indicates that the task of discipling the nations is being arrested as "ministries" budgets grow and the number of "missionaries" is maintained. In the profusion of ministries we have lost sight of one crucial gift. This gift is central to the strategy of the Holy Spirit for bringing men and women under the lordship of Jesus Christ. We call it the gift of the apostle.*

This "apostle" gift is neither more important than nor the same as that of pastor, teacher, administrator, deacon, etc. It is unique, it must be identified, and it must be affirmed and used to build up the body. The "apostle" gift may also contribute to drawing various ministries or specialties together in ways that build the church of Christ.

The church must follow the Holy Spirit in discerning all gifts and putting them to work--including the apostolic. Institutions and agencies should be responsive and facilitate this work of Christ along with other ministries. Similarly, there can be no fruitfulness in ministry if the church incorrectly discerns gifts so that a person gifted as a pastor is expected to function as an apostle or an administrator attempts to serve as a pastor.

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*See Virgil Vogt, "Rediscovering the Apostolic Ministry," MISSION-FOCUS I (5), May 1973.

Editorial Comment

In our fast-paced world there are many fronts on which the Christian witness is needed and opportunities abound. In the face of this, one of the most difficult problems is to discern which are crucial challenges as contrasted to those which present themselves as the most urgent. These are often not the same. Our ability to respond is dependent on whether we are formed and guided by fundamentals or are driven by fads and conventional wisdom.

This discipline consists in several elements. First, we must live in continual encounter with the Word. The church needs biblical realism concerning the world. This comes from the Word. The people of God are also to be equipped for witness, "thoroughly furnished." This comes from the Word. Second, there must be a strong sense of identity as the people of God. This identity transcends socio-historical reality and, therefore, cannot be based on culture.

The people of God know they have a beginning and an ending in God's purposes. In between that beginning and ending they have a mission to share in building God's kingdom and being a part of the divine purpose in history. It is that which gives unique shape to God's people--in contrast to all other peoples. Third, we are a community of the Holy Spirit. The regenerating-sanctifying work of the Spirit is a dynamic process through which the community of faith grows into Christ-likeness and is thrust out in witness to the world.

Mission-Focus can play only a modest role in speaking to issues and offering suggestions. We must be selective. The choices are guided by the considerations outlined above. Mission-Focus during the coming year will feature articles by Simon Gingerich and Virgil Brenneman on new strategies for missionary witness in North America, further reflections on the Christian's role in community development by Edgar Stoesz, and John H. Yoder writing on "The Shape of Anabaptist Liberation."

TOWARD CREATIVE STRATEGY IN CHURCH EXTENSION

by Simon G. Gingerich

The term strategy is a military term. As such it has serious limitations for
the use I am making of it in this paper. There are other military terms that
occur regularly in the language of persons concerned with evangelism and church
extension: campaign, crusade, surrender, win, victory, etc. Personally, I
feel uneasy about these terms because they can imply coercion and/or the mani-
pulation of persons. It is true that Paul used military language particularly
with reference to the engagement of Christians with the forces of Satan. On
the other hand Jesus used gentle terms: sow seed, fish for men, preach, teach,
give, heal, make disciples, say, come, etc., when He talked with His disciples
about their task of announcing the good news of the Kingdom.

I assume that Jesus is still calling disciples to follow Him. That means the
Church will grow if it fulfills its unique function of revealing Christ in an
otherwise sick, blind and broken world. We focus on the good news that the
Kingdom has come and that Jesus has forgiveness, hope and restoration for
everyone who will believe and follow Him. We recognize the work of God in the
loving service of persons bearing the fruit of His Spirit. The multiplication
of "twos and threes" and groups of any size who meet to reveal Christ through
their worship, their work, their witness, and their corporate life is the
concern of this paper. How does this multiplication happen?

The growth of Christ's Church from one point of view is a matter of divine grace
as God gives the increase. God's Spirit breathes new life where He chooses.
We who work in mission offices sometimes forget that we do not program God.
There are frequent surprises as the Holy Spirit renews and calls together per-
sons who are finding life in unexpected settings.

On the other hand there are human elements in the growth of the church. The
first century church was extended through the witness and the intentional
efforts of some persons who were particularly chosen because of special gifts
for church planting ministries. Many more persons simply shared their faith
as they moved about (Acts 11:14-26). It was a conjoint action of the church
and the Holy Spirit in discerning and sending some to evangelize and to bring
together persons who were believers already to form new churches (Acts 13:1-3).

It is reasonable to expect that God will continue to use persons in church planting ministries. Human elements are needed in the discernment of gifts and in the planning if persons and resources are to be deployed effectively. We are talking about the human element when we think of strategy for church planting.

The Coordinating Council of the Mennonite Church on May 1, 1974, considered the need for a strategy for church planting and growth. Consensus was reached that "the Board of Missions should take the initiative and work in partnership with the Board of Congregational Ministries to plan a process for developing a strategy for church planting and growth." (Minutes, Mennonite Church Coordinating Council, May 1 and 2, 1974.) The purpose of this paper is to begin the conversation and possibly stimulate some thinking toward a strategy for Mennonite church extension in North America.

Ross Bender notes that various strategies have been operative in the Mennonite Church in the past 20-30 years.
- a mission outpost for each congregation
- every congregation should be (become) a mission outpost
- evangelism workshops
- Voluntary Service units that resulted in church planting
- university campus fellowships
- house churches

The questions to be addressed now are, "What should be the thrust of church extension in 1975 and the years following?" And "What is the process by which our denomination with its decentralized organization can determine priorities and work together in worship, fellowship, evangelism, nurture, service, publishing, higher education, etc., toward the common goal of revealing Christ in ways that more and more persons will believe and follow Him, and that these in turn will find each other in new communities?"

Church planting happened during 200 years of Mennonite migration as our fathers settled the West and some of our brothers and sisters moved to the cities. One might call this "unintentional" church planting. It appears the movement westward was motivated largely by economic considerations, not particularly by evangelism or church planting.

No one knows how many opportunities for church planting were missed, but congregations were formed and many of them became relatively strong. Most of these were not "mission churches." They were formed on a different model. Neighbors and friends who sensed in each other common heritage and common faith and a need to share the Good News began to meet in each others' homes.

Leadership emerged in the group. Programs of worship and/or other fellowship activities developed as they decided. When they needed a preacher, they "made" one. When they wanted a meetinghouse, they built it. Caring for and helping one another were affirmations of Good News in the community in character with the verbal affirmations of their worship in families and in groups.

Church planting by migration was effective partly because of ethnic factors that tended to cause persons to move in groups and build communities around language and heritage as well as around faith.

There were gifted churchmen who traveled to frontier communities to help iso-

lated families make contact with groups that were forming, to help identify
leaders, to encourage and to assist in the formation of fellowships and then
to relate these new churches to each other and to the denomination. Some of
the conference mission boards in the Mennonite Church were formed in order to
provide these supporting services for beginning fellowships. Both the ethnic
factors and the service of itinerant churchmen were probably key elements in
the success of migration church planting.

For nearly one hundred years the Mennonite Church has had missions committees
on local, district and church-wide levels. The tasks of these committees have
not always been explicit. In general most of them have assumed that they were
to work at starting and/or supporting "mission churches." The process often
began with searching out an unchurched community, locating a meetinghouse,
calling a mission pastor, assigning volunteers to "help with the work," and
supporting the mission church and its program with dollars for building,
Christian education materials, and support for the minister.

The message of Jesus was announced verbally. Frequently it was demonstrated
by loving and caring attitudes and actions. Often the communities selected for
a mission church were places with obvious socio-economic needs. Some of the
needs were responded to by the workers and the supporting churches with pro-
grams of community service. While some thriving congregations emerged from
this model, many "mission churches" have remained mission churches a long time.

While the "mission church" model has been a strategy for some church planting
efforts there have been variations on the model. Missions leaders have studied
the movements of population. They have responded with growing awareness of
people problems: social and economic injustices, poverty, race, unemployment,
blighted housing, welfare, etc. For example, Voluntary Service has frequently
tried to work at critical needs such as public health, bilingual education,
housing. If, then, local people asked for it, a church would grow out of the
service program. Too frequently the church that emerged was a variation on
the "mission church" model with building, minister, workers and subsidies.
While the service program frequently has made a worthy contribution in the
community, it is not unusual for the "mission church," if it emerges, to remain
weak and dependent.

It is certain that the Lord has considerable experience with persons and with
(human) plans which are less than perfect. He will continue to build His Church
with imperfect material and faulty models. Our task is to pray for His direc-
tion and then to use the best judgment and the best insights that His Spirit
makes operative in our mission planning.

In the past, it seems to me, planning for church extension and mission was
done by a mission-minded minority in the church. To be sure, considerable
confidence was expressed in boards and committees. Support was good for mission
projects. It still is. The new Mennonite Church organization has made it more
likely that the whole church will be involved in determining priorities and
plans for church extension. Hopefully the whole church will have ownership in
and feel responsible for the decisions.

With new church structures and the new opportunities of working toward common
goals we will need a new strategy to guide our efforts. The following may be
some of the elements in church extension strategy for the next decade. This
will be understood as one person's effort to begin a conversation that may
eventuate in a strategy for the church in this area of concern.

Affirming the Small Churches

Mission boards and committees will continue to serve Christ and the church by supporting and otherwise positively relating to the many mission churches that have been established. Nothing in this paper should be interpreted as a signal to abandon these faithful small congregations that reveal Christ in their communities through the preaching, the fellowship and the service of the local body. In my judgment the "mission church" model should continue to be used for some church planting efforts.

The fact that more than half the congregations of the Mennonite Church are small churches* can be positive in a creative strategy for growth. But for smallness to be positive, the unique advantages of a small congregation will need to be appreciated. Leaders of small congregations are calling for help in their special requirements. Church and mission office staff need to develop resources for the particular challenges of small congregations. In July 1974, the Indiana-Michigan Conference conducted a three-day retreat for pastors of small congregations (and their families). Much more should be done by conferences and agencies for small churches.

Renewing the Larger Churches

Mennonite congregations come in all shapes and sizes. Many of the larger congregations as well as many medium sized and smaller congregations are vital fellowships in which the presence of Christ is experienced. Worship, fellowship and service are authentic. Many of the resources of personnel and dollars that are available for the denomination's mission, service and Christian education programs come from the medium sized and larger congregations. We affirm that most of our congregations are alive and well.

There are changes, however, in many Mennonite communities. Many rural Mennonite churches are declining in membership and attendance because of the migration of Mennonite young people to industrial, commercial, and educational centers. Changes in agriculture have caused a net loss of population in some rural communities. At the same time some Mennonite congregations find themselves in growing suburban developments and a few in throbbing urban sprawls.

It is important for us to recognize the changes and to plan our church extension strategy in the light of the changes. Congregations in areas of declining population or growing population can adjust their expectations and their programs to the realities of present and future mission opportunities.

Along with adjusting programs of established congregations to the realities of present and future mission opportunities in the community, we need continuing renewal in the life of all congregations.

New congregations should be planted, I believe, in strategically chosen suburban and urban communities. The Mennonite diaspora and the movement of population generally both argue for the planting of new congregations in the suburbs and the cities.

Virgil Brenneman says in "The Mennonite Diaspora In Our Mission Strategy," that a large number of persons in the Mennonite diaspora are free-lance Christians for whom the Christian calling plays only a minor role. The implication of this statement is that the church, as it is experienced in the typical sanctuary congregation, frequently does not come through as important

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to many younger members. If this is true then congregations (and all the supporting agencies of the church) need to consider hard and long what changes are needed to renew the vital signs and experiences of life in the congregations. This renewal, if it is to reach younger persons, will need to be experienced and expressed in terms of meaningful relationships and caring services. For this reason I, personally, favor the formation of smaller units of Christian encounter within a larger assembly or congregation. (See Paul M. Miller, "A Shape for the Congregation of the Future," Mission-Focus Vol. II No. 2, November 1973)

Some New Models

Without depreciating the importance or the vitality of the congregations that make up the present Mennonite Church, I suggest that for this particular time in North America it may be well for the church to consider some new models for starting new congregations. A fresh study of the New Testament may bring a new awareness of the validity of the house church model for the fundamental experiences of Christian witness, worship, fellowship and service. The New Testament also may give us some fresh insight into the work of Paul and other itinerant church planters of the first century. They evangelized. Characteristically they helped scattered believers to find each other, to choose leaders, and to work out problems that threatened group fellowship. Short initial stays with a beginning group were the rule. Letters and fraternal visits affirmed and encouraged believers and related them to the older established congregations at Antioch and Jerusalem. They developed interdependence between newer congregations and established churches.

It may be that a study of the Anabaptist period will yield important insights about how groups were formed in the 16th century and about the role of itinerant leaders in the formation and growth of groups across Northern Europe. David Groh in the Spring 1974 issue of Missionary Evangel comments that community, compassion, and servanthood are three important areas in our heritage. He quotes Franklin Littell, ". . . the inner city is precisely the area which calls for the kind of community witness for which the sons and daughters of Menno are justly noted. In the world which we are moving toward . . . the 'house church' as a community of brethren will be desperately needed." (A Tribute to Menno Simons, Herald Press, 1961, p. 50)

It may be too early to predict the full implications for church extension strategy of the new forms of house churches and intentional communities that are emerging at various places. Persons thinking creatively about the growth of the church and about planting new churches will do well to study and observe this growing edge of our church life.

The Mission Counselor

Responsible planning for growth and for new churches requires a reevaluation of the services provided by mission boards, conferences and the Board of Congregational Ministries to assist small congregations and house churches. The missions commission of one conference recently took action to make the services of the commission available to any congregation, large or small, that asks for help for planning for and fulfilling its mission in its community. Almost before the ink dried on that minute, the leader of a congregation asked what help is the commission prepared to give? These are the critical questions. What is the help churches ask for? What is the help beginning groups need?

It seems to me that the most critical help asked for by beginning churches is for a resourceful, sensitive person with experience in church development to be available for counsel. I suggest that an element in our new strategy should be the identification of mission counsellors who would have particular gifts and convictions for helping groups begin, for helping them relate to each other within the group and for discovering and addressing themselves to their mission task. The Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions has designated mature mission pastors in geographical areas of the Home Missions program as mission bishops. The Counsellor I am proposing would have certain parallel functions.

Particularly if the church should move toward the use of house church models for church planting it will be important to have persons available for the services described above. He also would relate small groups to each other in larger assemblies and to the denomination.

Good News for All

It is time for persons working at Mennonite Church extension strategy to reexamine our target audiences. For decades we have tended to find the poor community, whether in rural areas or in the inner city. To them we go with service projects and church planting. In my judgment this has been good insofar as it reflects Jesus' concern for the poor.

It is bad when it is motivated by less noble considerations. Unwittingly this disposition to seek out blighted communities for church planting has compounded the problems of church growth and leadership development. Human nature, upward mobility and (sometimes) housing regulations require persons to move from a community when their circumstances improve. Perhaps we should focus on more flexible models for church planting and service ministries in poorer communities.

While we have been preoccupied with ministries in poorer communities, we have largely neglected middle and upper income areas for evangelism and church planting. We need to remember to share the Good News with all persons and plan for churches to be planted in all kinds of communities. Anything less than this is to neglect making Jesus known to persons for whom He died and to fail giving creative witness to His lordship to persons who exercise power and make decisions either for the liberation or for the oppression of others.

Don Yoder, pastor from Phoenix, Arizona, commented in a recent letter: "I believe we need to see the challenge of church planting and extension and growth in all communities, including both minority and white suburban middle-class communities. As you know, we have Mennonites scattered all over the West and Southwest in many communities where there are no Mennonite churches. I believe that it is important that we see the challenge of brothering these people into a Mennonite fellowship that believes in evangelism and the priority of witnessing for Jesus Christ. If we believe that Christ has commanded us to go into all the world, then we need to see that this is a part of the world to which we should go."

Service Programs

Voluntary Service should be expanded. Service should be done simply because persons are hungry or hurting and we know that Jesus cares. Christ is revealed through the deeds of caring or loving service. This revelation of Jesus is often the first significant step in church planting when the Holy Spirit leads one or two to believe and follow Jesus.

It is my conviction that Mennonite service programs would reveal Christ more

fully if more attention were given to how we explain the deed of loving service. What, if any, is the difference between giving a cup of cold water and giving that same cup in the name of Jesus? What does it take to reveal the glory of our Father through the "good works" that we do?

Norman Kraus, in his book, The Healing Christ, says that when Jesus sent out 70 to announce His kingship, as reported in Luke 10, He instructed them to eat, to heal, and to say in that order. Kraus makes a point that to eat is to receive from and accept the services of the host. To heal is to demonstrate the reality of God's love and power. Finally, the verbal message simply explains what has happened. It seems to me that Voluntary Service units are particularly suited to the functions Jesus intended for the 70 whom he sent to announce the kingdom. This ministry may be preliminary to and then become an integral part of a fellowship of believers if a local church emerges.

This concept of the relationship of VS units to church planting implies (1) re-thinking how Christ is revealed through deeds of service and some responsibility for giving this witness to Him, (2) rethinking how VS units relate to and become part of the local fellowship of believers. This rethinking should help move us toward a more creative strategy in church extension.

Servanthood Roles in Mission Strategy

In certain geographic areas, notably Appalachia and ghetto areas of our large cities, there are many small independent churches. Frequently these small churches have limited facilities, untrained leadership and inadequate nurture programs. Often they are in competition with each other. Sometimes they are exploitive of the people they serve.

Might it be possible, instead of planting still another church in these com- munities, for the Mennonite Church to make a trained Bible teacher available to move into a community to begin to share in whatever way he or she was invited to do by such independent churches? The objective would be to learn from and to share with one or more of the groups that are already experiencing Christ and the gospel. It would require a servant role. There would be some suffer- ing, some crosses. It might be the Jesus way to help in some locations where churches already exist.

A variation on this theme is a proposal for "A Seminary on Wheels" currently being considered by the Home Missions Division of the Board of Missions. The plan would put a Bible teacher on wheels to spend a week, a month or several months, to teach and to share with mission pastors and lay leaders. The "seminary" would provide in-service training on location particularly for mission pastors who have not had opportunity for formal college and seminary training. The itinerant teacher-counselor would be a brother and servant to study with and to pray with the mission pastor about the issues that confront that particular mission congregation.

> Simon G. Gingerich was pastor of the Holdeman Mennonite
> Church, Wakarusa, Indiana, for 15 years. Since 1964 he
> has been associate secretary or secretary for Home Missions,
> Mennonite Board of Missions.

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* Paul W. Shank, then with Mennonite Publishing House, in 1969 noted that 25% of our Mennonite Church congregations had 24 members or less, another 24% fell in the 25-49 member range. Thus 49% of our congregations had 49 members or less. Median membership was 51, average or mean membership was 89.

THE MENNONITE DIASPORA IN OUR MISSION STRATEGY

by Virgil J. Brenneman

The Apostle Peter addresses his first epistle to a Christian diaspora, the
people of God who were dispersed as strangers to the provinces and towns of
Asia Minor. From Peter's words of encouragement we understand that his readers
were suffering persecution. Perhaps their dispersion was the result of perse-
cution. He sees them, perhaps all Christians, as "foreigners and strangers in
the world" (I Peter 2:11 NIV).

My concern is the Mennonite diaspora. Members of our churches are also scat-
tered, for a variety of reasons, to many locations separated from their home
congregations and/or the congregations of their denomination. While they
exist as "foreigners and strangers" in only a modified sense, this scattered
membership can and should play an important role in our mission strategy.

Church extension through the scattering of its members is not new to Mennonite
experience, but extension in the sense of mission through its dispersed members
has been incidental rather than a conscious or deliberate strategy. Our formal
strategy has been to send missionaries and to establish mission outposts or
churches.

<u>The Diaspora in the Mission Strategy of the New Testament Church</u>

The New Testament expects <u>every believer</u> to be a part of and involved in the
witness-mission of the church. This is one reason why the early church ex-
panded so rapidly. In a short span of time the gospel was preached and wit-
nessed to in almost every corner of the Roman empire and beyond. Most of this
expansion was carried out by ordinary believers who were scattered. Christian
cells emerged far and wide.

The apostle-missionary played an important and essential role in the establish-
ment of the new churches, but often when he arrived on the scene believers were
already present. The gospel preceded the apostles to Samaria, to Cyprus, to
Antioch. Paul wrote a letter to the fellowship in Rome which was established
long before he arrived there. Acts 8:14 to 15 and 11:19 to 21 and 24 report
how this happened. Persecution scattered the early church. The believers were
effective witnesses. "Those who were scattered went about preaching the word."
It is also reported that the apostles were not among those who were scattered.

These developments fit Jesus' expectation in Acts 1:8. His statement is both
a promise about the Holy Spirit and a prediction of how the Christian disciples
<u>will be</u> witnesses wherever they are scattered to the ends of the earth. That
is precisely how it worked out in the New Testament church. This provides us
with a basis for the modern scattering of Christians.

The people of God, wherever they may be, are the primary resource for mission,
ministry and service. The model is comprehensive: <u>every believer</u>. The mode
is <u>to go</u>. The "great commission" to make and teach disciples is to be carried
out by Christians "as they go."

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The Early Mennonite-Anabaptist Experience

The 16th century Anabaptist movement, like the early church, spread rapidly. It was carried primarily through the witness of ordinary believers who were scattered all over Europe. After the initial thrust, the major expansion of the Mennonite Church has been by group migrations and colonization. In fact, the world-wide distribution of Mennonites, except for Africa and Asia, largely resulted from migrations.

The sending of missionaries is a comparatively recent development among Protestants. For the Mennonite Church this began with the opening of the Chicago Home Mission and commissioning missionaries to India, both late in the last century. The earlier migrations which took Mennonites to North America and Russia and more recently to South America were primarily stimulated by persecution. Economic and social forces motivated Mennonites to follow the frontier across North America.

We must admit, however, that our fathers who followed the frontier westward, like their fathers who came to this continent from Europe, expected to establish churches. The question of leadership for the "new" churches was often settled after the community was established. Help was frequently sought from parent churches. These responded either by sending ministers or by authorizing and ordaining someone in the new settlement. When whole communites moved, the ministers often moved with them. In world-wide Mennonitism the largest communities of believers have generally been those established by group migrations or at least nuclei of believers.

The New Mobility and the Scattering of Mennonites

Mennonites have always been a people on the move. Today they are involved in a new kind of mobility. As a result of modern communication and transportation, they share the greater freedom and mobility of our whole culture. In one family eight children of a father, who was born and buried on the same farm, live in seven states from coast to coast. A Mennonite congregation reported an increase of four times its membership in 17 years but also noted that one-half of the membership reported 17 years before had moved away. Of every seven members received since then, three have moved away. The new mobility is geographic--from state to state, from country to city to suburb. It is also social and economic--up the ladders of affluency, education and class.

The opportunity for Christian witness provided by the current ease of communication parallels the opportunity of the early church. The relative peace which prevailed under Rome (Pax Romana) and the consequent freedom and ease of travel throughout the Mediterranean world helped in the rapid spread of the gospel.

The comparison breaks down, however. Early Christians suffered persecution. The modern mobile Christian suffers respectability. We probably expect too much if we hope the modern Christian will be a persistent witness without the pressure of persecution as his brother experienced in the early church.

A further difference between the modern mobile Mennonite and his migrating forefather is that his ancestor generally moved in community. The modern Mennonite usually moves as an individual for private reasons. He frequently lives in isolation from any Mennonite community or from any of his brothers who with him could become the nucleus of a new church community. Some current excep-

tions are the intentional communities and house churches which may move as a
group (e.g., the Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship recently moved to Evanston as a
group. They originally moved from Goshen to Atlanta as a group.).

Mennonites today are dispersed in towns and cities all over North America and
up and down the economic and social ladder. The academic diaspora participates
in more than 600 colleges and universities. In addition there is the service
diaspora (Voluntary Service and other), the vocational and professional dias-
pora, a convenience diaspora (to take advantage of Florida and Arizona climates),
and the ideological diaspora (persons who leave in protest against worldliness
or to seek the simple life in an intentional community).

The modern diaspora has been fruitful in the establishment of new congregations,
particularly where larger numbers provided for an effective core group.
Churches thrive in communities in Florida and Arizona where Mennonites first
went for convenience and winter sun. VS units have become the nuclei for
emerging churches. University faculty and students have been the initiators
of congregations at State College (Pennsylvania), Columbus (Ohio), Urbana
(Illinois), East Lansing (Michigan) and elsewhere. Members from Mennonite
churches in Puerto Rico who moved to New York City gathered together and grew
into congregations with the help of Gladys Widmer and others. Thirty-five of
200 congregations under Lancaster Conference started from service and witness
activities of Christian young people (Gospel Herald, March 21, 1967).

The fact that most of these congregations emerged at the initiative of the
"migrants" rather than as a conscious mission strategy reflects positively on
the health of the Mennonite congregations from which they came. When help was
given, it generally was to provide a place of worship for the growing number of
persons moving into an area. The Iowa City Mennonite Church started as a
"mission" to provide a church home and a place of service for young people
beginning to attend the nearby university. The initiative often came from the
people on location concerned for the Christian education of their children or
for keeping alive the witness of their Christian heritage. Even when motiva-
ted to provide a church home for persons away from home, new congregations
were usually seen as missions.

Unfortunately many away-from-home members make little or no effort to become
involved in an emerging church or in mission. One persistent question is
whether this number would be as large if there were a strategy for mobilizing
the diaspora for mission.

We have come a long way from the earlier dichotomy of "church" and "mission,"
but we still live with the legacy. It is one reason for our failure to fully
utilize the strengths of Mennonite communities which our mobile members could
bring to the city. Instead of the "church in mission" it is still "church
and/or mission." Church and mission still look like two different enterprises
in kingdom building to too many young people, who do not feel at home in the
"mission" congregations. Their experience of mission in the home church has
been inadequate and some of the "mission" congregations may not be prepared to
serve them adequately or to use their gifts. Instead many either seek a
spiritual home elsewhere or drop out. A potential personnel resource is lost
to the struggling "mission" congregation.

This legacy has also made us overcautious about the criticism that a Menno-
nite nucleus may become an overpowering cultural transplant and a deterrent to
mission instead of witnessing to the "new community."

This legacy has caused some city pastors in the diaspora situation to see their mission in narrowly specialized functions. Some have felt that they do not have the time or mandate to look after scattered "Mennos" in the city; but if mission means anything at all then the lost sons of Menno are also worthy of recruiting for the kingdom of heaven. A renewed son brings gifts of heritage and training that can strengthen emerging churches. This separation of church and mission is effectively challenged by intentional communities. They start by building up the church as the way for mission to happen. The witness of the local body of Christ is more telling than that of the lone Christian.

Equipping and Mobilizing the Mennonite Diaspora as Conscious and Deliberate Strategy

We already possess a mission strategy or strategies. These are employed in the case of the missionary, both domestic and overseas. The missions model of providing guidance and other resources, in this case other than financial, might well be the clue as we seek to mobilize and equip the diaspora. The Mennonite diaspora is potentially a financially self-supporting witness. We have not given moral and spiritual support to them as we have to the missionary. What kind of results would we expect if we treated our overseas missionaries as casually as we do many of our scattered members?

The entire church--local congregation, conference, boards and agencies--have a stake in a mission strategy that involves the diaspora through preparation, orientation and continuing supportive relationships. Following are several steps which I feel are needed if we are to support the diaspora in mission. Some apply more specifically to local congregations which have the initial influence on people. Others call for action from the entire church.

1. Search for a better understanding. What does the Lord want to tell us from our own and others' experience? We should test the relative and long-term effectiveness of past efforts as to: 1) the presence of a nucleus of Christians in the beginning and under what conditions the nucleus was brought together (through study, vocations, discontent, schism, mission); 2) the availability and quality of counsel and guidance; 3) type of support community (board, nearby congregation or other). Reporting for the General Conference Mennonite Church, Leland Harder says that the most concentrated extension activity occurred in a period when they planted churches with the specific intention of bringing together nuclei of Mennonites who had moved to the city. I know of no similar study for the Mennonite Church.[1]

What might be learned by polling scattered members living where there is no opportunity to relate to a Mennonite fellowship or to join with others in forming a fellowship? How many of them are involved in other churches or are not involved in any church? How many would have participated in a Mennonite witness if the option had been available? How many are available if such a witness were to emerge now? What expectations and experiences in the home church have a bearing on their decision about choice of location for their job and how it relates to the church and its mission? We already know that some, perhaps many, in such circumstances are not interested in relating to a Mennonite witness at this time. We also know that others do not have a local Mennonite option but retain an active interest in the Mennonite witness. They subscribe to church periodicals, send their children to Mennonite schools, support missions, etc. But we do not know how many there are in each category nor the dynamics.

2. <u>Provide guidance, counsel and the church's resources</u>. Mission boards stand beside the missionaries they send with guidance, counsel and leadership. At least it is available. In our conviction about the church as a "voluntary association of believers" and in our commitment to the principle of indigenous development, we have neglected our scattered brothers. In failing to make leadership and other personnel resources available we have often left them to a lonely struggle, to either sink or swim. Our support for scattered persons and struggling small groups is sometimes much too casual. We may further discourage them by accepting the cultural value which puts a premium on bigness. But the real discouragement for small Christian groups derives not so much from their smallness but in their lack of some of the gifts needed for group growth and strength.

Scattered groups and persons must have access to the gifts in the larger brotherhood by making more persons available. The availability could be on a variety of levels—itinerant shepherds, a visiting brother or sister, an overseer, or a pastor. Paul Landes shares his vision and hope for the potentially emerging churches in the cities of the Southwest. In many locations a small Mennonite nucleus would be found. He appeals, "If churches are to emerge in Tucson, Boise, San Francisco, and other cities, we need leadership persons who are willing to take risks and see the challenge of building a congregation . . ." (<u>Gospel Herald</u>, April 23, 1974).

The Apostle Paul never left a young convert or struggling group without support. Prayer? Of course. But he visited them or if that wasn't possible he wrote letters and sent Timothy or someone else. To provide the guidance and counsel our scattered Mennonite brothers deserve for their mission requires the availability of more persons.

Our commitment to their mission should be strong enough so that we not only provide orientation and training on a level commensurate with that for the missionary or the VSer before leaving for service, but also to provide commensurate continuing resources and support. In these two cases we already have models which can be adapted—workshops, retreats, seminars, in-service training programs, etc. We can at lease imagine some of the possibilities of releasing, for example, a New Testament scholar for a teaching ministry to the diaspora, similar to the use of Howard Charles for the missionaries and churches in Japan and West Africa.

3. <u>Capitalize on the gifts and skills of the diaspora</u>. Not only are persons in the diaspora potentially self-supporting witnesses, but many originally moved because of their specialized training and skills. They possess skill in counseling, education, economics, administration, and many others. They have experience with Headstart, welfare and other social programs. To equip and mobilize them for mission is to tap a large leadership potential.

Again I take issue with those city missionaries who have made too little effort to locate, converse with, and mobilize this resource. The fact that it is often a thankless, discouraging task doesn't justify the neglect. So what, if some of the sons of Menno must first of all be converted? The earliest missionaries, like our Lord, went first to the lost sheep of Israel. This didn't mean neglect of Christ's other sheep who must also be brought into the kingdom. Though this is not quite parallel with our situation, it is instructive.

4. <u>Family of God and continuing relationships</u>. We emphasize the importance of active participation in the local fellowship of believers as the way to give membership significant meaning. The ideal is so important to us that members who move away are strongly urged to take their church letters with them. (See, "The Meaning of Church Membership," Harold Bauman, <u>Gospel Herald</u>, March 19, 1974 and the discussion "nonresident member is a contradiction.")

In a letter which appeared in the April 16, 1974 issue of <u>Gospel Herald</u>, William Zuercher writes, "I happen to be a nonresident member and the only other option at the present would be to relinquish membership in the Mennonite Church. We participate actively in the local Presbyterian congregation, but they understand and accept our allegiance to the Mennonite Church. . . . Perhaps the Mennonite Church could create a kind of 'general membership' for persons like us who value our Mennonite heritage and understandings and don't want to give them up, but whose location makes it impossible to participate in a Mennonite congregation. In that way we would not inflate a distant congregation's enrollment or membership statistics, but we could still remain active and involved in denominational interests, programs and concerns."

I am personally acquainted with other persons who are isolated from a Mennonite congregation and find fellowship in congregations of other denominations. But they also retain their Mennonite identity and witness, some for as long as 15 years. These continuing relationships are being maintained largely from the side of the person in the diaspora rather than from the side of the church.

The plea by Zuercher to the church for a structure in which to comfortably maintain a continuing relationship is not a desire for sectarian exclusiveness. This is contrary to his own and others' practice. But I believe it is a valid request, particularly if we believe strongly in the issues to which the Mennonite-Anabaptist heritage is witness--a witness of which many persons in the diaspora still want to be a part. A structure for a continuing supportive relationship need not narrow but may rather enlarge the possibilities of sharing ourselves and our witness in the larger Christian fellowship.

Another argument for maintaining continuing supportive relationships grows out of our strong convictions about the nature of the church and the meaning of membership. The relationships are "church family" relationships. This implies love, support, sharing, caring and closeness. We do not expect to make a complete or absolute break with our biological or kinship family when a member moves away. Many of the support elements of this relationship are never relinquished. Likewise if the "church family" relationships have been meaningful at all we cannot break these without loss. The church maintains continuing supportive relationships with the missionaries through its mission boards. There is no structure by which to continue these relationships with the diaspora. I have the suspicion that even the local congregation maintains a more active "family" relationship with the missionary who has gone from it than with other members who have simply moved away.

5. <u>Raise the level of expectations</u>. Almost every commissioning service for an overseas missionary, particularly in the home congregation, underscores our double standard of expectations for the missionary and the ordinary

member who moves away. To commission one and not the other contributes to these differing expectations as much as does the content of the commissioning. We simply do not have the same high expectations of others as we do for the "missionary" or even the VSer, even though we believe that everyone ought to go forth with a sense of mission.

There are other corollaries of this double standard. One is the confusion between job vocation and the Christian vocation. Another is the mistaken view that mission is more appropriate or at least more needed overseas or in the urban ghetto where the "pagan" with real needs exist. Where this stance prevails it is unlikely that a middle-class person moving into another middle-class community will be involved in mission any more than before. A crucial element in our mission strategy is to raise the level of our expectations for everyone's involvement, particularly those who move. This should be both implicit and explicit in our life as a brotherhood.

6. Christian education for people on the move. The Christian education in our churches must prepare us for leaving home, often at an early age, and instill an expectation which seeks for or helps create Christian community elsewhere. We should be educated to see ourselves as all sent into mission. This is both more biblical and in keeping with the realities of living in a mobile society.

    Many of our members leave home permanently by age 18 or 20, for service, college, travel or job.[2] My observation is that many young people, like their elders, are not really prepared to become involved as Christian witnesses. Entirely too many leave with a desire to escape from the church rather than with a sense of mission. Others may relate to any away-from-home church in the same passive church-attender, sermon-hearer pattern they practiced at home.

    Our teaching should provide us with an experience of what it means to be the church of Jesus Christ in any location and circumstance in which we find ourselves. This is certainly our expectation in the training of missionaries. Persons joining the diaspora might also be trained and oriented toward their "field of service."

7. Multiply small groups of committed Christians. Underlying the discussion thus far is a discomforting reality. Perhaps a majority of the persons in the diaspora are free-lance Christians. Their decision to move was private and for personal or vocational goals. For many the Christian calling played only a minor role, if any. The church will also have played only a minor role, if any. Very few will have sought the counsel of the brotherhood. Our strategies will have to take these realities into account. They underline further the fundamental place of the local congregation.

    An alternative to the free-lance approach is demonstrated by the Paoli Medical Group which emerged from within the Mennonite congregation in Indianapolis, Indiana. This group, composed largely of medical and related professionals and their spouses, covenanted to move as a body some 90 miles to Paoli to provide a "health care delivery service." The move is to a community where both their services and the church's ministry is needed. Their decision as a Christian fellowship was made in consultation with the congregation of which they are members. They and the congregation in Indianapolis are also consciously structuring continuing and supportive relationships.

The Paoli group's approach to mission is instructive for other types of services and communities. It emphasizes the importance of the church's involvement with members of the diaspora from the very beginning. I am personally committed to the ideal of multiplying small Christian groups (house churches, intentional communities, Paoli types, etc.) over entire cities. But this requires enough structure to relate them to each other and to the whole in order that they may have the support we all need for growth and engagement in mission.

Let's be serious. My argument throughout has been that a strategy for mission must take seriously into account those persons who are in what we have called the "Mennonite diaspora." To do so does not minimize the need and place for the missionary specialist with his specialized training for a specific task. But we are already serious about him, his mission, and his training and support needs. But we have not been as serious about the mission of Mr. Ordinary Church Member, whoever and wherever he may be.

My contention is that if we are really serious about members moving into the diaspora, we will find or create structures to implement our basic convictions about involving everyone in the mission of the church. The possibility of new churches emerging will be multiplied. The missionary specialist will often share in the benefits through the presence of a self-supporting nucleus of involved persons.

Ideally, the initial equipping and mobilizing of persons occurs in the local congregation before persons leave. Many of the continuing church family support relationships are also maintained from there. However, making available the gifts and other resources of the larger brotherhood requires other structures, some of which may already be present.

> Virgil Brenneman was Secretary for Student Services,
> Mennonite Board of Missions from 1958 to 1974.

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1. Harder divides General Conference Mennonite home missions into four phases. 1. Rural church extension (1860-1900), 2. City missions (1900-1940), 3. Urban church extension (1940-1969), 4. ????????? (1970-ff). He sees each phase as serving a particular period in their development and understanding of mission. Of the fruitful urban church extension phase he says, "The third phase of church planting had the Mennonite nucleus as the first concern . . . though many transferred to another long established congregation . . . it would certainly not have been possible to retain over 12,000 members who left their home churches between 1950 and 1970 but remained in the GCMC if we had not established over 40 new city congregations during that time. In no previous history of the conference was there such concentrated church extension activity." Minutes of Church Planting Consultation, September 18-19, 1973, Exhibit A.)

2. Iowa-Nebraska and Lancaster conference congregations reporting on 340 nonresident young adults who moved away in the decade of the sixties listed the following reasons: vocational 27%, Selective Service 18%, educational 13%, marriage and family 9%, Voluntary Service 8%, missionary 2%, unknown 22%.

Editorial Comment

World mission requires the faithful church to move on multiple fronts simultaneously. In many ways the most crucial frontier is the domestic one. Here the church faces minimal cultural barriers but the task is no less complex.

One of the keynotes of the "indigenous church" ideal--long the basis for missionary strategy and philosophy--is that the most effective evangelism and church extension is done by Christians indigenous to a particular culture. This assertion need not wait to be tested out in lands where the church is new and struggling to grow. The whole of church history is a commentary on that proposition. It somehow looks less grand and promising when viewed domestically.

Baptist, Lutherans, Mennonites or Methodists need not go abroad to learn how they will perform as missionaries. We are what we are whether at home or abroad. The test of that identity is most acute where the church has the longest history. Its viability in world mission is revealed in the church's witness in Jerusalem and Judea.

Simon Gingerich calls for a fresh look at how we are doing on the domestic mission scene and to explore new paths. Virgil Brenneman fixes our attention on one important potential resource. Both articles are intended to provoke further thought and action.

TO PROCLAIM OR TO SERVE?

by J. D. Graber

I propose to challenge the traditional, perhaps easy, answer to the question of what is the most effective, and the most biblical, method of propagating the gospel in the world. I was jolted upright by a recent statement by a Catholic missionary in Africa who "thinks the contemporary Church neglects its real mission by confusing it with the teaching of arithmetic and the principles of cattle management."[1] Later in the same review he shocked his listeners by saying that when he goes on a missionary tour he doesn't carry penicillin or sulfa drugs even though he knows he will meet someone who needs them because his experience has taught him that being a medicine man is a sure way of avoiding the tougher job of being a missionary.

We Mennonites, in recent years especially, have taken as axiomatic that the proper way of opening a mission work is to begin with relief and social service. We have accepted uncritically such cliches as, "You can't preach to a man who is hungry"; or, "Our message is to the whole man--physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual"; or again, "The word and the deed can't be separated." We have almost gotten to the place where it smacks of heresy even to call into question such statements. I am not denying the validity or the truth of these statements, but I believe we have made them carry too much baggage in our present-day missionary thinking. I propose to open questions such as these to wide examination and evaluation.

My mental reservations on this aspect of mission strategy are not all of recent origin. In 1960 I wrote in The Church Apostolic:

> A timeworn, and we may say naive, concept in missionary thinking
> on the relation between service and witness needs to be called
> into question. In many quarters it has been taken for granted
> that the missionary cannot approach a people directly with the

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[1] Fr. Donovan, "Missioner with a Message," National Catholic Reporter, June 25, 1969, 6.

Gospel; that we must give them physical benefits, which they
appreciate and for which they have a felt need, and only then
can we begin to tell them the Gospel story. It has been taken
for granted that people will be so appreciative of material and
physical benefits received that out of sheer gratitude they will
accept the Gospel. Unfortunately this is not the case.[2]

We have become long on relief and service and have neglected a strong emphasis
on gospel proclamation. We have banked much on what we might call "The
silent witness." I wrote in 1960, "Are we not in danger, when we try to
preach after we have served, of creating misunderstanding and confusion?" I
also quoted Dr. H. D. Northfield in that same context as follows: "He (the
missionary) must and will have to proclaim God's truth . . . to those around
him; he may, of course, do so quite effectively without opening his mouth at
all, but generally, in such instances, the message becomes neutral and
feeble" (italics added, JDG).

What I am reaching for is not a negative mission philosophy that says the
church should not engage in social service to the needy. I am trying to see
the relation between the concern of the Christians in their world on the one
hand and the missionary strategy of the church on the other. Are these two
aspects of the task of the church really different and can we distinguish
between them? This requires hard thinking and the answers are not easy.

I honestly feel there has been confusion in our mission strategy; and, by
the pragmatic test, we cannot say that our strategy has been effective. For
us to excuse our ineffectiveness by saying that even Jesus himself was not
successful in winning large numbers of followers is begging the question.
The Apostle Paul and the early church, where Jesus Christ was very much the
center of all faith and loyalty, was eminently successful in gaining a wide
acceptance for the gospel. The growth of the church in that era was nothing
short of phenomenal. Father Donovan describes Paul's success as follows:

> In the year 47 Paul started on the first of his three famous
> missionary safaris. In that year Christianity did not exist
> in any of the places to which he was to go. His first safari
> was about 1200 miles. He worked in an area of about 15,000
> square miles. . . .
>
> His second safari was 2650 miles. The area to work in was
> 30,000 square miles. He worked five months in one place, one
> and a half years in another and then went home again, his work
> finished in the second place. . . . His third safari was 1400
> miles. He had nine other missionaries with him. The area of
> work was 5,000 square miles. He worked in one place for two
> and a quarter years and then went home for the final time. . . .

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[2]Herald Press, 1960, 58.

The year was now 57 A.D.--10 years later. And in those ten years he had planted Christianity in four provinces of the Roman Empire. He is not remembered for any schools or hospitals that he started, or for any social programs he initiated. As a matter of fact he hardly seemed to advert to the slavery all around him. But he is remembered, as St. Paul, for the work he did in those four provinces, for the foundation of the churches we know as the churches of the Thessalonians, and the Philippians, the Corinthians, Ephesians and Galatians.[3]

We have had many voices crying in the wilderness, as it were, insisting that Acts is our text book for missions and that Paul's strategy and method should be imitated and emulated. One of the best known authors stressing this point of view was Roland Allen, an Anglican missionary to China. He felt strongly that the standard missionary strategy of the colonial period he saw and lived with in China was wrong because it had no biblical foundation, nor was it effective in establishing the New Testament kind of churches. So he wrote and published in 1914, Missionary Methods--St. Paul's or Ours, and some years later, The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church and the Causes Which Hinder It.[4]

The tragedy is that no one paid much attention to what he was saying. I read his books in the late twenties in the atmosphere of colonial-type missions in India. Although the ideal was intriguing and challenging, the method seemed idealistic and unrealistic. It simply did not seem feasible or possible to repudiate and to change the method so firmly entrenched and so well in harmony with colonial period thinking. Allen sensed this mind-set when he wrote to his son a strangely prophetic word saying it would probably be 1960 before his mission philosophy would be accepted.

This was an uncannily accurate prediction because it was about that time that the breaking up of colonialism drove the missionary thinking of the churches away from the old accepted patterns back to biblical foundations. New editions of his books were published in Great Britain and in America and Roland Allen's views on the work and place of the Holy Spirit in the founding of Pauline type churches are receiving new attention.

In contrast to the service and institution-centered mission approach Allen stressed the power of the gospel to convert men and a radical dependence on the Holy Spirit to build up and guide these new believers into living churches. Paul emphasized charity, hospitality, and brotherly mutual aid for "members of the household of faith especially." But his missionary efforts did not utilize the benefits accruing from such services as a missionary approach. Rev. Donovan expresses it vividly when he says:

> He really had a lot of nerve going into a world of circus and
> gladiator cruelty, degradation of women and wholesale slavery,
> and doing nothing about it except planting the idea that some
> day might do away with these evils. He must have been appalled
> by the sickness and beggary and prostitution of the sailor
> town of Corinth. But he just preached the Gospel--the good
> news, as it came to be known.[5]

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[3]Donovan, loc. cit.
[4]Both published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1962.
[5]Donovan, ibid.

He then describes his experiences among the Batomi people of East Africa. He writes:

> The Batomi people are a people suffering from a good deal of underdevelopment, and a state of womanhood that would undoubtedly shock most of you, plus a few other things thrown in. It is not an easy thing to decide what to do. Christian missionaries have been among them for 16 years, dispensing charity on an enormous scale, but their underdevelopment has not changed an iota, nor has the condition of Batomi women. It is a difficult decision to make, to coolly plan that you will do nothing directly about their underdevelopment, or their view of women or their other problems. To make matters worse, every outsider who has ever been among them has spoiled them by perpetual handouts. They have come to expect this of outsiders, and they have become the most dependent tribe in East Africa. . . . The Gospel had better be enough for the Batomi people. God help me, I have nothing else to offer them.[6]

So we have by this time raised a lot of questions about the traditional missionary approach. But there is still more to come, and from an unexpected quarter. William Stringfellow, a lawyer, an Episcopalian, grew up with a tremendous sense of social concern. This concern led him to take a room in a terribly decrepit apartment house on one of the worst streets in Harlem. He felt compelled to live among these depressed people and to share life with them. His description of life in Harlem and of the degradation and poverty of these people is literally hair-raising. He identified himself very fully with the people. He sought to help raise them up to better things. He was a missionary, but certainly of a very untraditional type. After several years of involvement and so-called missionary attempt he concluded, as he wrote in My People is the Enemy:

> What is requisite to mission, to the exposure of God's Word within the precarious and perishing existence of poverty, is the congregation which relies on and celebrates the resurrection. . . .
>
> The Churches have been beset by a false notion of charity. They have supposed that the inner city must become more like the outer city before the Gospel can be heard. They have thought that mission follows charity. They have favored crusades and abandoned mission. I am all for challenging the face of Harlem, but the mission of the Church depends not on social reformation in the neighborhood, as desperately as that is needed, but upon the presence of the Word of God in the society of the poor as it is right now. If the mere Gospel is not a whole salvation for the most afflicted man, it is no comfort to other men in less affliction. Mission does not follow charity; faith does not follow works, either for donor or recipient. On the contrary, mission is itself the only charity which Christians have to offer the poor, the only work which Christians have to do.

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[6]Ibid.

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The promise of most urban church work, it seems, is that in
order for the Church to minister among the poor, the church
has to be rich, that is, to have specially trained personnel,
huge funds and many facilities, rummage to distribute, and a
whole battery of social services. Just the opposite is the
case. The Church must be free to be poor in order to minister
among the poor. The Church must trust the Gospel enough to
come among the poor with nothing to offer the poor except the
Gospel, except the power to apprehend and the courage to re-
veal the Word of God as it is already mediated in the life of
the poor.

When the Church has the freedom itself to be poor among the
poor, it will know how to use what riches it has. When the
Church has that freedom, it will be a missionary people again
in all the world.[7]

The question of how to meet the crying social needs of people is always facing
the missionary. The standard response to human need in foreign missionary
work has been to establish institutions. Are people illiterate? Establish
schools. Are they sick? Open hospitals and dispensaries. Are they orphans?
Establish orphanages. Etc., etc. William Read in New Patterns of Church
Growth in Brazil, discusses this missionary dilemma at length. His research
led him to see that Pentecostal type churches have had nothing short of a
phenomenal growth during the past several decades while the standard, old line
churches, with the standard, old line institutional approach have grown
scarcely at all. Read writes regarding mission institutions and their failure
to produce the climate for church growth. Here are a few brief quotations:

While institutions still liberalize communities, the extension
of the Church no longer depends on them. An epoch is passing,
and institutions suddenly find themselves in a completely new
situation unable to realize that a new day calls for a new
vitality and a new emphasis. . . .

When educational institutions founded by missions are mentioned,
Brazilians tend to classify them in the same category as public
utilities--and the cry is often raised, 'We're being exploited
by foreigners.'. . .   In the event that the spirit of national-
ism continues to increase, this tension might develop to the
place where these institutions could possibly do more harm than
good to the cause of the Gospel. . . .

Thus, more and more, the institutions have only marginal value
for the Church, for believers are usually not wealthy people.
Their children cannot buy educational opportunities in such a
complicated institutional setup. Years ago they could, but
not today. Things are different; times have changed. . . .

There is no way to escape the gnawing appetite that institutions
have for missionary finances. Institutions, once organized,

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[7]Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1964, 99.

grow and demand more and more of men, mortar, machines and
money. It is useless to speak of institutions being able to
support themselves eventually--it is merely an idle dream.[8]

What Read has said is clear: mission institutions do help a few people, but
they do not solve the problem of the people at large. They help what we feel
are the fortunate few to acquire an education and to raise themselves out of
the lower social classes to a middle-class bourgeoisie, thus cutting them-
selves off from sympathetic communication with their erstwhile brethren,
making them sterile as Christian witnesses, and actually often arousing jeal-
ousy and resentment against themselves and against the gospel, while the
social problems of the people remain as they were. William Read finds a much
better pattern among Pentecostal type churches. First of all the grace of
Christ is proclaimed, leading people to accept Christ and to become members
of the Christian fellowships. Although he receives no handouts and no direct
financial aid, especially not from a foreign mission, the convert does get
new hope, a new motivation, and a better pattern of life. Thus begins a
steady climb out of his poverty, hopelessness and degradation. Here are a
few random quotes from Read on this subject:

> The Assemblies win thousands of the masses and attract
> countless artisans who compose the lower middle class of
> Brazilian society. These Pentecostals then march on into
> higher echelons of the Brazilian social class structure. . . .
> Peasants drift into the cities and almost over night large
> slum areas appear. The Assemblies preach the Gospel to
> these people, and many respond, swelling the churches. . . .

> Humble attain higher social status: In the fellowship of the
> Assemblies there is a constant challenge to live a better
> life. It is necessary to learn to read, find a way to edu-
> cate one's children, be economical, frugal, live simply, and
> maintain a high spiritual level. Old, expensive vices are
> renounced, and all of life changes into something better.
> Something has happened and eventually these Christians find
> themselves attaining a higher station in the social struc-
> ture, especially when their children have the opportunity of
> an education and are able to enter respected vocations that
> pay higher salaries and wages. . . .

> There is social revolution in Brazil today, and all govern-
> ments are certain to make better and better provision for
> the common man. I believe he will win his revolution through
> the instrumentality of the Church which gives him a chance
> to rise with God's help to new hopes, positions, and happi-
> ness in relation to his God and to his fellow man. The
> Assemblies present Jesus Christ to the masses as their only
> hope of achieving God's gracious plans for them. . . . They
> are rising everywhere into new levels of character and god-
> liness. God is blessing them with income, education and
> status. . . .

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[8]Wm. B. Eerdmans Co, 1965, 102, 103, 106, 107.

To the hopeless the Gospel is something new and challenging.
In it they find help where there seemed to be no help.[9]

If we need more documented evidence we can find a rich lode in Dr. Donald McGavran's writings. Of course we know him as the man who has for years been tirelessly proposing the radical idea that in the gospel we are commanded to harvest and not merely to plow and to plant. In one of his earliest books, The Bridges of God, he writes:

> Under the present strategy Christian leaders tend to think of missions as a conglomerate mass of mixed chicken-raising, evangelism, medicine, loving service, educational illumination, and better farming, out of which sometime, somehow a Christian civilization will arise. The treatment for all such splendid and self-sacrificing mission work (italics added, JDG) is the same: pray for it and support it.[10]

Dr. James A. Scherer of Chicago Lutheran Seminary in his most perceptive book with the unfortunate title of Missionary, Go Home! analyzes the historical development of the institutional approach to mission during the colonial period and highlights its ineffectiveness in producing New Testament type churches on the apostolic pattern. To quote him:

> Christians have differed in their understanding of the purpose of service in relationship to the total missionary program, but they have never taken the attitude that feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, healing the sick, and caring for the helpless was not Christ's will for His people. (Is he here differentiating between the universal task of the Christian citizen and of the Christian community and the mission strategy of the Church? JDG) During the colonial period Christian missions received encouragement to develop educational, medical, and welfare institutions to the fullest extent.

> Even the revered three-self formula may prove to be a Trojan horse--doing more to extend the institutional pattern of Western Christendom into the younger churches than it ever did to promote real indigenization.

> And again: The younger churches cannot be blamed if they accuse western missions of prejudicing their future by saddling them with the institutional baggage of western Christianity. When the indigenous church movement came into full swing a century ago western Christianity had nothing better to offer.[11]

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[9]Ibid., 130, 137, 143, 211.
[10]Friendship Press, 1955, 103.
[11]Prentice Hall, 1964, 114, 100, 101.

Conclusion

To recapitulate my argument:

1. The primary mission of the church in the world is to declare the gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus, and to announce to all men his absolute Lordship.

2. If a missionary approaches an underdeveloped people first of all with a social service program, the impact of the gospel will be dulled and the message will be confused.

3. Let our missionary strategy begin with the gospel itself. Social service is best accomplished as people get new hope in Christ and new motivation to better living. This kind of inner-motivated self-help is more effective in solving social ills than the conventional institutional approach.

4. We recognize that love, unselfish service and charity are cardinal Christian virtues incumbent on every individual Christian citizen. But we distinguish between this duty common to every Christian citizen and the missionary strategy of the church.

5. Evangelism, gospel proclamation and bringing persons to faith in Christ need to be placed in the forefront of our missionary strategy, thus giving social services and charity a secondary place--not in Christian living but in mission strategy.

> J. D. Graber served as a missionary in India 1925-42, a relief commissioner in China 1943-44, and as general secretary and secretary for overseas missions of the Mennonite Board of Missions 1944-67. For six months in 1967-68 he assisted in the famine relief program in Bihar, India. In 1959 Graber delivered the Conrad Grebel Lectures which were subsequently published as The Church Apostolic. He wrote the March 1973 Mission-Focus (Vol. 1, No. 4) entitled "Motivating for Mission." During the 1974-75 academic year he is serving as administrative associate in the MBM overseas office.

Editorial Comment

In "To Proclaim or to Serve?" J. D. Graber has joined the debate fundamental to missionary activity throughout post-Apostolic church history. To be sure, the terms of reference have shifted over time, but the underlying issues have been constant: To what extent are socio-economic conditions and cultural development requisite to faith in Jesus Christ? Or, does the gospel represent a transcendent force that enters a person's life without cultural connotations. What, after all, does the incarnation mean for missionary strategy?

Missionary agencies have been the pioneers for nearly two centuries in establishing services that minister to the whole man. The educational systems of Africa can be traced to the efforts of Christian missions. The spread of modern medicine around the world was strongly promoted by missions. Emergency relief and development programs were fostered from early days by Christian missions. But some of the problems which developed when the young church became dependent on foreign assistance came to haunt missionary statesmen. Motives may be mixed but methods can lead to wrong results. It isn't easy to translate the language of incarnation into practical programs.

Answers to such questions do not come easily. The issues are exceedingly complex. We need to turn to the Bible for the light it can throw on these questions and to missionary experience for the lessons of history. Two comments are in order.

First, we must take the incarnation seriously for that is the way by which God in Jesus Christ entered human history. The incarnation was an affirmation of God's extraordinary love for the world. It was not, however, love that could reach its object without a cross, death and resurrection. For too long we have appealed to a theology of the incarnation as the starting point for mission and service strategies without letting that lead us to its completion. Unless our understanding of the incarnation is complemented by a theology of redemption, it will never be adequate.

Second, missionary experience demonstrates the futility of trying to build a new church through material inducements--whether this is put in grandiose terms of creating a "Christian" civilization or simply improving the standard of life through community development. Nothing is more quickly perceived than the ulterior motive. Plenty of people have become "Christian" in order to gain material or social advantage. Always this has led either to a demeaning of their self-respect or resentment of the missionary. If conversion to Jesus Christ means bringing persons to their full and true humanity, we cannot employ methods and approaches which work at cross-purposes with that divine intention.

CHOOSING THE DEVELOPMENT CATALYST

by Edgar Stoesz

Discussions about the concept of development leave the impression that it has
only recently been invented. In reality it is not new either to society at
large or to the church. Concerned people and nations have long shared their
substance and discoveries--out of varied motivations--in the expectation that
the less advantaged will be helped. Unfortunately, little carefully gathered
and tested theory has resulted. Too much development activity must still be
characterized as trial and error. The purpose of this paper is to make some
contribution to development theory in general and to apply development theory
to church-sponsored efforts in particular.

One of the most basic questions facing development workers is, what will cause
persons or a community to break out of the traditional cycle of poverty and
permit them to exercise greater control over their welfare? What will help
them to realize their God-given potential more fully? What concept or
innovation can serve as the development catalyst?

People and communities do not develop in isolation. The person or community
which draws a circle around itself and refuses interaction is doomed to
stagnation. Development requires interaction with the outside world. Interaction
stimulates. It increases and defines options. The development process can
be aided by the introduction of outside ideas or innovations which can be
indigenized.

What innovation will accelerate the process? To stimulate thought, a few
current approaches are reviewed below, followed by seven specific guidelines
for choosing a development catalyst.

Twelve Catalysts

Paulo Freire contends that "conscientization" is the answer. When people are
made aware of the potential which exists in them and their surroundings, they
change their outlook on life. Until this awakening has taken place a person is

enslaved by fatalism. Once it has occurred new energy pours into the system and expresses itself in a variety of ways.

To Ivan Illich the answer lies in "deinstitutionalizing" society. According to Illich, traditional institutions no longer serve; they dominate. He begins by dismantling the institutional structure and replaces it with a system which is more responsive and which truly belongs to those it is meant to serve.

The Rockefeller and Ford Foundations have concluded that technology is the missing link. Scientists, for example, have developed improved strains of cereal grains which increase production by as much as 400 percent. These efforts are often referred to as the "Green Revolution."

Following the independence of a number of African nations in the 1960's, many development agencies were convinced that formal education was the foundation of development. Mennonite Central Committee established the Teachers Abroad Program through which more than 400 people have served since 1962. Mission boards likewise accelerated their assignment of teachers who served in African schools. A contribution was made.

Another type of catalyst functioning in Bolivia is in the form of an animal traction program. As long as a peasant family has no form of nonhuman power, it can farm two or three acres at the most. On this scale the family is doomed to live at subsistence level. Mechanical power is beyond its means; but, with the availability of a mule and some horsedrawn equipment, one family can increase its productive acreage and produce a surplus or more than its own needs.

In Nyanga, Zaire, Fremont Regier and his staff have concluded that the church is the engine for development. When people leave their traditional religion, they adopt new attitudes toward life and work which are conducive to develop-ment. The solidarity they experience in the church makes possible cooperative efforts. The rabbit and chicken projects which have been introduced on this base have raised the standard of living.

The Faith and Farm approach pioneered by Peter Batchelor in Nigeria and duplicated in other countries assumes that the missing link is agricultural extension combined with the availability of the necessary seeds and chemicals. A network of para-professionals known as animateurs is organized to perform these functions.

In the Heifer Project scheme the animal is the catalyst. It is a source of concentrated protein. With good management it can be the beginning of a herd or flock. The requirement to pass on the first female offspring gives an ongoing multiplier effect. The animal gives the development worker an intro-duction to the receiving system which can lead to broader involvement.

The World Bank, Credit Union National Association, Mennonite Economic Development Associates and other financially oriented institutions believe that the missing link is supervised credit. One feature of credit is that it provides additional resources to further an indigenous process. The practical problems in credit

programs have been many, but most agree that credit is a necessary part of a comprehensive development program.

In Bangladesh it is double cropping; in the drought-stricken Sahel it is water; in Paraguay it is Buffel grass which produces better pastures and makes possible a livestock industry. Multiple illustrations could be given of approaches which have proven their merit in their setting. In any other setting each would have been a disappointment. What are the guidelines which can help the conscientious development worker choose wisely where to concentrate attention? Seven suggestions are offered.

1. <u>The development agenda must come from the receiving system.</u>[1]
   Development workers are tempted to function from their biases. They are inclined to introduce elements they are familiar with rather than go through the more difficult and time-consuming task of determining what a community wants and needs. Teachers are inclined to start schools. Doctors will build hospitals. Agriculturalists will begin the kinds of plots with which they are familiar. Missionaries will start churches with North American theology, liturgy and architecture. These things may be needed and will likely be accepted if offered. But are they in fact what the community wants and needs most?

   Determining what a community needs and wants is never an easy task. In the first place, there is the hidden thought (sometimes not so hidden!) that the receiving system doesn't know what it wants, much less what it needs. Anyone harboring such thoughts should go no further. The planning which grows out of such mentality does not bear good fruit.

   This does not mean development workers wait for the receiving system to bring them the agenda, carefully thought through with North American logic and neatly typed. To actively listen, feel and sense is not passive. It is hard work. Effective development workers place themselves in a stance which will draw the agenda from the receiving system.

   The development agenda comes from the receiving system. The first job of development workers is to acquaint themselves with it.

2. <u>The innovation[2] must be adoptable within a reasonable time frame.</u>
   An innovation is, by definition, a change in the normal process. It belongs to the innovator(s) until it becomes incorporated into the indigenous process. How long this assimilation process takes depends on the innovation. For example, a semi-modern hospital introduced into a community which does not have facilities to train nurses or an economy which will pay for these

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[1] The term "receiving system" is used even though it does not convey perfectly everything intended. The receiving system is not to be viewed as passive. On the contrary, the role of the receiving system is both dominant and dynamic. A receiving system may be a person, family or institution.

[2] The term "innovation" may refer to a concept or a technology. It is foreign to the system to which it is being introduced and will hopefully serve as a catalyst for development.

services cannot be assimilated quickly. Its sponsor should be prepared to be very patient while the community catches up to its innovation.

The introduction of an innovation which cannot be assimilated within a reasonable time frame creates serious problems. First, it frustrates and destroys the confidence of the receiving system by reminding it of its limitations. Second, it is a disappointment to the innovator who has been unrealistic and who grows impatient while waiting for assimilation to take place. The tendency is for development workers to overestimate themselves and underestimate the job.

The innovation must be adoptable within a reasonable time frame. Until this has taken place the innovation belongs to the innovator and has not been added to the bank of indigenous resources.

3. <u>The innovation must be within the competence of the innovator.</u>
Development workers must guard against the temptation to undertake that which they are not competent to complete. Some may want to be heroes while others are simply responding to the expectations of the receiving system. Disaster follows in either case.

The innovator cannot, of course, know everything there is to be known about a given subject. In some cases technical services may be available from other sources. But in one form or another the technical capability must be present to successfully complete what is undertaken.

4. <u>The innovation must lead to an ongoing process.</u>
One aim of development is to stimulate an indigenous dynamic which will become its own center of energy. In some cases the ongoing process takes the form of an indigenous institution. Institutions are a patterned way of life by which collective action restrains, liberates and mobilizes human energy for the performance of certain functions. Since he role of institutions in modern society is often misunderstood, it may be helpful to state some of the functions and/or characteristics which this concept assumes.

   a. Institutions aid in problem resolution. Every social system is beset by problems, some of which can be resolved only through a mechanism such as an institution. Only institutions which help solve problems deserve to exist.

   b. Institutions are instruments of collective action. Although an individual may be helpless in the face of a particular problem, pooling his resources with those of others through an institution may develop a solution that would be impossible if he acted alone.

   c. Institutions make action predictable. An individual is unpredictable-- subject to moods and erratic behavior. An institution represents the collective mood of its members. It is restrained from impulsiveness by its constitution and bylaws. Through an organization an individual can form stable expectations of the behavior for fellow members and the group.

d. An institution adds permanence to a process. People have an uncertain
    life span. In an institution continuity is in the office and not in
    the officeholder. In a mature institution organizational momentum
    pushes the effort forward with the officeholder exercising limited
    direction.

e. Institutions integrate action and behavior. In a group context
    individual behavior must be guided by the norms of the group. Group
    solidarity forces conformity on its members.

Before an innovation can take root and continue independently, it must
be indigenized. This involves being subsumed within or integrated into
the institutional structure of the receiving system. This applies equally
to the church because the church, let us not forget, it also an institution.

5. <u>An innovation must be introduced with respect for the receiving system,
    including the right to adopt, adapt or reject altogether.</u>
    Development workers come and go, but a receiving system cannot escape its
    problems. Receiving systems are more inclined to remember this fact
    than overconfident development workers.

    Development workers are more effective when they proceed from the assumption
    that the receiving system knows better than they what is good for it. Books
    have been filled with illustrations of impractical innovations which have
    been advocated by overeager development workers.

    The rate of adoption is related to the degree of risk. In a subsistence
    system there is no reserve, and, therefore, no room for error. Systems
    which refuse to adopt an innovation are probably not convinced it is
    worth the risk. Sensitive development workers are patient while the
    receiving system is passing judgment on the practicality of their innovation.

    Most innovations must be adapted. The solutions from one system seldom
    fit the problems of another. Refusal to allow for adaptation leads to
    an inappropriately designed development catalyst.

6. <u>The receiving system should be involved with the innovation while it is
    still in the conceptual stage.</u>
    An innovation, be it a rabbit or a cooperative, is, by definition, foreign
    to the receiving system. It must be adopted before it is indigenous. At
    first it may be understood only by the development worker. Later a few
    of the more able leaders will increase their understanding of it. Unless
    the innovation is sufficiently understood by enough people at a sufficiently
    early stage, the chances of successful assimilation are reduced.

    The inexperience of many development workers is a serious problem. They
    themselves may not sufficiently understand the innovation and the process
    by which it is adopted. They are often so anxious to get on with the job
    that they short-circuit the crucial educational process. They see the
    end of their term approaching, and they want concrete results. Some
    deserving ideas are ruined before they get into action because of the way
    in which they are introduced.

The ideal is to introduce an innovation in such a way that it is owned by the receiving system from the outset, and therefore need not be subjected to the hazardous transplantation process. To move ahead aggessively and independently is to build on sand.

7. Development workers are servants and not saviors.

They understand that they do not bring development--at best it is accelerated and at worst frustrated by their presence. They are conscious that the context out of which they function, including the assumptions made, comes from another culture. They accept the fact that the only power they have is the power of the innovation brought, and the receiving system will pass judgment on its usefulness. Recognizing that the receiving system is dominant and that they are subordinate, they maintain a low profile and seek to give confidence and support to indigenous leaders. Authorship of ideas is not tightly held. Their role is not to lock themselves into a prominent position but to work themselves out of a job.

This paper assumes that it is possible, desirable and even necessary for persons and/or organizations to assist each other in the process of development. By learning the lessons of past experience, the process can be continually improved. This assistance must be given in a carefully chosen and disciplined manner. It must proceed from an attitude of humility and reciprocity. These principles apply to church building as well as to community development. The urgency of the task is twofold for the Christian who shares the secularist's humanitarian concern but is motivated by the expectations of our Lord Jesus Christ who gives purpose and strength.

> Edgar Stoesz has served with Mennonite Central Committee in the administration of both domestic and international service and development projects. Recently he was appointed Director of Rural Development and Food Production by Mennonite Central Committee. During a study leave at Cornell University he wrote Beyond Good Intentions which was published in 1973.

Editorial Comment

It has often been said that change is the only constant in human affairs. Development is not new. There are new dimensions, however. The sheer scale and rate of development of the industrialized nations in modern times has no prededent in history. This "take-off" on the part of certain nations of the world has been bought, to some extent, at the expense of others. It also dramatizes the differences in living standards between those which have moved ahead rapidly and those which have remained static.

The degree to which development has come to occupy the attention of social scientists, government planners and philanthropic agencies is unique. The emergence of corps of development theorists and planners, engineers and technicians, volunteers of all assortments is without parallel.

Yet all of the amassed expertise and good intentions did not prevent the late President Kennedy's "Decade of Development" from turning into disappointing failure. Apocalyptic notes are sounded today particularly by those experts who see present realities as professionals. What is to be done to mitigate the effects of runaway population growth in countries least able to absorb more people, famine in some world areas and food scarcity predicted for others, the less than human living conditions of millions of people in great slum cities? The "human prospect" does not look good. What is the word from heaven in such times and circumstances?

We cannot be tempted to believe that that "word" comes solely in the form of expertise and technology. The rapid growth of the Gross National Product of western nations mocks a spiritually impoverished post-Christian west. There is a bread which does not satisfy.

A part of the despair which descended on development experts in the 1960's was due to the realization that development is a very complicated process. People change patterns slowly. Incentive and motivation are key ingredients in progress but difficult to create. Technology is not enough.

Instead of a word, I suggest, there are several words for our day. He who is the Word speaks judgment to the rich, compassion to the poor, rebuke to a hypocritical church.

There are two things which the church must always keep in mind as she confronts world need. The church, in the first place, is to be a pioneer in compassion. Second, Christian compassion sees the whole person and cannot, therefore, settle for less than the whole answer to human need.

NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS: A Challenge to Mission

by Gottfried Oosterwal

I

The sudden rise of thousands of new religions, syncretistic cults, and prophet movements is one of the most remarkable phenomena in our day, and a formidable challenge to Christian missions. One aspect of that challenge is the sheer number of these movements, their millions of followers, their vitality and growth, and their universality. They occur from Japan to Jamaica, from California to the Congo, from Brazil to Burma. And hardly a week passes but that somewhere another prophet arises or a new charismatic leader emerges who becomes the center of a new movement.

They also arise under the most diverse economic and political and cultural circumstances: in the Buddhist world of Thailand or Burma or Vietnam, as well as in the Christian Philippines or South America. They emerge spontaneously in the isolated and marginal societies of stone-age New Guinea as well as in the affluent and pluralistic world of the American technopolis, in Muslim Indonesia or the Sudan as well as in secularized Europe, in Hindu India as well as in communist Russia, in rural Africa as well as in such metropolises as Tokyo or Sao Paulo.

In spite of these many differences in the cultural milieux in which they arise, these new religions show striking similarities in origin, form, development and goals. Some of these general characteristics are:

1. They usually emerge from a crisis-situation. In many areas it is the crisis brought about by the contact between a dynamic and wealthy civilization and a more or less static, technically and economically underdeveloped population, the "colonial situation" (Balandier). But, universally, this crisis-situation is also a result of the whole technological revolution of our day, the process of modernization, the rapid urbanization. The shock of the breakdown of the traditional social structures, especially of the primary groups, has neuroticizing effects on individuals. The devaluation of traditional values, economic deprivation, and a host of other social and political and religious factors at work today, cause a loss of stability and security and bring psychic stress and cultural confusion.

In many studies of the new religious movements this crisis-situation has been considered the prime cause, if not the only one, of their origin and growth. It has become evident, however, that though the crisis-situation works as a catalyst to stimulate or precipitate the rise of a movement, giving it a particular form and determining its development and growth, most of these so-called liberation-movements, short-circuit reactions, protest-movements, revitalization-movements, cargo-cults, etc., are genuine religions. And religion is sui generis.

They cannot be explained by just nonreligious factors. Culture clash, anxiety, social disintegration, political oppression, future shock, etc., don't make prophets; they don't produce a cosmic eschatology so characteristic of many of these new religions. It is, however, these prophets and their revelations, the messianic expectations, the cult-practices, and the spirit-filled life of the believers that are a challenge to the Christian churches. And as we know of similar crises that did not produce new religious movements, so we also know of cults and millennial movements that have emerged without particular crises.

But mission leaders must now ask themselves, "Why do these millions of people find their emotional and social stability in these new religions? Why do they not flock into the established churches instead?" Is it possible that these prophet-movements, indigenous churches, and syncretistic cults arose precisely because the churches in their life, mission, and theology were unable to offer these people the fellowship so badly needed in a time of social disintegration, meaning in life in a time of utter confusion, power in an age of depression and distress and poverty and powerlessness?

Where these crucial human needs in our "age of crisis" (Sorokin) have been fulfilled by Christian churches, such new religions either did not arise or they were absorbed by the established Christian community. The crisis-situation challenges Christian churches and missions to become, indeed, the body of him who preached freedom to the oppressed, offered rest to the heavy-burdened, kinship to the alienated and the lonely, a point of orientation to the confused, hope to those in distress, healing to the sick--body, soul, and spirit--and power to the powerless. Certainly, Christ's Kingdom is not of this earth, but yet it is a tangible reality. Salvation has come today.

2. These movements commonly center around a charismatic leader. They are not just group-reactions; nor do they simply or spontaneously emerge out of a commonly experienced crisis. The origin and history of these religious movements is, generally speaking, the history of its leaders. They are to these movements what the condensation nuclei are to the formation of rain: the rallying point, the inspiration, the creative center. The origin of a movement can often be traced to the mystic experience of a prophet who is said to have had special revelations from God, or a spirit, through visions, dreams, or auditions.

Often these leaders, either men or women, are said to be endowed with special gifts--prominent among them the gift of healing, the gift of prophecy, the gift of speech, the gift of trance (i.e., of having direct contact with the spirit-world or of being a channel through which the godhead makes his will known to man), the gift of leadership, and the gift of performing miracles. As a result of these gifts, adherents often follow these leaders blindly, giving many of them great power and authority. The leader then really shapes the movement.

It cannot be denied that these charismatic persons often show schizophrenic tendencies. But rather than merely considering these men and women mentally or psychically ill, or explaining their neurotic (or psychotic) condition or behavior as a result of negative childhood conditioning, we need to take into consideration the complex whole of cultural, social and religious forces to understand the charismatic person. Too few students of these new religious movements have given attention to the totality of circumstances and conditions out of which the charismatic leader has emerged.

In missionary circles these leaders have often been brushed aside as "charlatans," "neurotics," "deceivers," "false prophets," "demoniacs," etc. Anthropologists tend to seek a scientific answer to these charismatic leaders' behavior in hereditary factors and in their psycho-social conditioning. Even though there are socio-cultural factors, which can be defined and analyzed, prophetism or revelation or divine powers of healing or a person's spiritual calling cannot be reduced to a purely rationalistic explanation.

It has been shown that these charismatic persons, in general, have had a more intensive personal contact with Christian missions--and missionaries--or with representatives of western civilization than the average person. Quite frequently this intensive encounter has been experienced as a conflict. Sometimes it is conflict of a rather personal nature, but nearly always a clash between two cultures, two value-systems. This has led many of these leaders to the ambivalent behavior for which they are noted. They do not fully participate in the experience of the new culture, certainly not on the level of those with whom they have their intense encounter: church and mission leaders, technological specialists, political authorities. But neither are they any longer, if they ever were, fully integrated into their own culture and society.

Out of this marginal situation the prophet and the charismatic leader emerges. Soon he becomes the key figure in the rise of a movement which sometimes rejects the traditional values, sometimes the new culture and its representatives--including missions and missionaries--but which in general selectively adopts elements from both and develops them into a new way of life and culture. Hence the terms "importation-movements," "accommodation-movements," or even "revitalization-movements." Their form and direction are often given by the charismatic leader, even though these movements commonly change in a second and third phase of their development.

These charismatic leaders are a particular challenge to Christian missions. They are key figures in the development of genuinely indigenous churches. From them people expect answers to the many problems they face in their daily needs. To the extent that these answers satisfy them and fulfill their needs, such prophets and charismatic leaders are trusted and followed. They become the formulators of an indigenous theology.

No one will deny that in this process at times wrong answers may be given and distortions of the Christian heritage occur. But is not the whole history of the church a history of such errors? Rather than sitting in judgment upon these prophets, should not the Christian missions and churches attempt to assist them, in all humility, in the formulation of a theology that is both biblically true as well as relevant to the real situation in which the people find themselves? Does not the work of the Apostle Paul teach us that true theology emerges out of the encounter with the real situation in which people live, work and suffer, rather than in isolated centers of learning, through mere transplantation or by social heritage?

3

The rise of the new religions challenges Christian missions to recognize the working of the Spirit in African, Asian and Latin American leaders whom God has chosen as his instruments to advance his mission. The recognition demands new attitudes and new relations with such charismatic persons. The emergence of so many prophets and visionaries also challenges western missionaries to discover anew that true theology, in essence, develops as mission theology, as truth that is relevant to the particular time and circumstances in which the gospel reaches man.

3. Most of the new religions find their creative center in an apocalyptic idea, a cosmic eschatology that inspires hope and gives the believers the assurance that the present evil state of affairs will soon change. By some miraculous event, usually of a cataclysmic nature, this world will soon be destroyed, and a new age will be ushered in that knows of no sickness or sin, no tears or oppression. Soon a messiah will come who will bring a new freedom, destroy the oppressor and establish a government of righteousness with happiness and abundance for all. The dead will return and man will live forever, happy and free. Earthquakes, floods, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, famines, diseases, wars, increasing crime, etc., are warning signs that the destruction of the world is at hand and the coming of the messiah is near.

People differ in their ideas as to how this renewal of the present state of affairs may be achieved. In some movements the Golden Age is a glorified past, and people are urged to work for the regeneration of their old paradisic tradition. The term "nativistic" is very appropriate for such movements as the ghost-dance movements of the North American Indians, or the Milne-Bay cult in New Guinea.

In other movements, such as the cargo-cults, it is the old culture that is rejected. Temples and other sacred objects are destroyed and people adopt and imitate the new, often without quite understanding its meaning. At this point mass conversions to Christianity frequently take place. These people movements towards the Christian church are not merely a story out of the past. They continue to happen in Indonesia and Cambodia, in Thailand and India, in Africa and South America. Often unrecognized by mission leaders for what they are, the movements sometimes fizzle, or they develop into new religions or prophet-movements.

Western missions with their individual-oriented approach, their institutionalism and their lack of messianic expectations may be unable to absorb such people movements when they arise. This has been one of the real tragedies in missions the last few decades. From Oceania to Africa whole villages and tribes and communities have turned away disillusioned from established churches and missions. They did not find in them the fulfillment of their eschatological expectations and the reality of the coming kingdom, either because it was no longer an essential part of the missionaries' message or the messianic hope was ignored in the real life of the church and of the believers.

Fortunately, at a time when Christian missions may expect many more of these people movements to occur throughout the world, new insights are developing into the nature of such movements and the best ways of encouraging them to grow into genuine Christian communities. But the answer to the challenge of those new religions that center in the expectation of the soon-coming messiah, resurrection of the dead, judgment and arrival of a new heaven and a new earth does not lie in methodology.

Success in mission always depends on the content and clarity of our message, and it is that very missionary message that is challenged by these messianic movements. They stand as a corrective to the lack of hope, the lack of expectation of the soon-coming

4

Christ, the lack of urgency, and the lack of credibility of that hope in the churches' and missions' life and preaching. The new religions challenge Christian missions to rediscover the biblical message of the coming of Christ and of the full restoration of his Kingdom, and to give that message new credibility through the life of the church, the missionary, and each individual believer.

<div align="center">II</div>

If the sheer rise and growth of the new religious movements, their particular message and their universality, already challenge Christian churches and missions, the fact that the majority of these movements and cults emerge from contact with Christian churches and missions presents an even greater challenge. It is true that new religious movements have arisen--and do arise--outside the contact with Christian missions or western civilization. There is ample evidence of this in history. From the pre-Christian era until the nineteenth century there are many indigenous myths that tell of messianic expectations among American Indians and people of Africa, Asia, and Australia before their contact with Christian missions. Evidence also comes from such movements as the poona-cult and other cargo-cults in the isolated areas of New Guinea. But the majority of the new religions do emerge out of contact with Christianity, thereby presenting a series of challenges that mission leaders must take seriously.

The epicenter of these movements is found in Africa. By 1967 nearly 6,000 religious movements had emerged from this contact-situation with established churches and missions. These movements comprise some ten million followers in nearly 300 different ethnic groups. Since 1967 the process of "independentization" or "indigenization" has continued, producing some 100 new churches, cults, or prophet-movements every year with memberships totaling some 400,000 people. Today the total number of new religious movements may be some 6,500, with a membership of 17-20 million people, spread through nearly 400 different ethnic groups. If this process continues, by the end of the century these new movements will have almost as many followers as established Protestant and Roman Catholic churches. They will certainly greatly surpass them in influence, power, vitality and missionary growth.

In Latin America there may be fewer movements than in Africa, but their spread and growth is at least as phenomenal. In fact, the number of their followers is so large and their influence on society so strong that these new religious movements have become a "third force" in many Latin American nations. In Brazil, for instance, such spirit-cults as Kardecism and Umbandism have become the popular religions of the rapidly expanding urban populations. According to some conservative estimates, Kardecism has a following of over three million people. One of Allan Kardec's main publications, El Evangelio segun el Esperitismo, has sold over a million copies in just a few years. Already in 1960 the movement operated nearly 2,000 institutions (hospitals, clinics, schools, orphanages, etc.), about as large a number as the Roman Catholic Church had in Brazil and twice the number of institutions operated by Protestant churches and missions.

An even greater following has been reported from the Umbanda-cult with its great emphasis on healing and the spirit-filled life. More than half the masses of poor people in Rio de Janeiro are followers of the Umbanda-religion, over half a million people in that city alone. From a movement of about 100,000 followers in 1955, the Umbanda-cult has become a national religious movement with over ten million adherents. Umbanda has more temples and religious centers than all Christian churches and sects in Brazil combined. At the national congress of the Umbanda movement in July 1973, delegates came from more than 100,000 temples and cult centers. Each center has about 100 members.

Like the Kardecists, the followers of the Umbanda religion come primarily from the proletarian masses of Brazil especially among the huge city populations, the poor, and the migrants in the south. With the process of urbanization continuing rapidly during the next two decades, it may be expected that the influence of the Umbanda religion will increase still further.

These city populations as well as the proletarian masses of society (the poor, the peasants, the lower and the lower middle classes), also flock into the many new Pentecostal movements. This is true for all of Latin America and the West Indies, but especially in Chile, where already in 1971 36% of the population belonged to one of the new Pentecostal groups. In Trinidad this percentage was 23; the Bahamas, 21.5; Jamaica, 17.6; and Brazil, 16.5. In Chile nearly 90% of all Protestants belong to one Pentecostal group or another. In Mexico that percentage is already 70. It is expected that by 1980, 15-20% of the Mexican population may be Protestant, most belonging to one of the many new Pentecostal movements.

In Brazil it is especially the Assembleias de Deus that shows a vitality and a growth perhaps without parallel in the history of mission. From its origin in 1910 until 1930 the movement grew to 13,500 members. In 1957 there were already close to 700,000. Ten years later their membership had grown to 1.5 million, but since 1967 another four million have been added, making a membership of some five or six million today. And the Assembleias de Deus is only one of the 40-50 new Pentecostal groups whose membership make up some 70% of all Protestants in Brazil.

In Africa and Latin America the new religious movements with their many millions of adherents arose in the backyard of established Christian churches. What is the nature of these relationships? What is there in the established churches and Christian missions, Roman Catholic or Protestant, that stimulated the rise of these new movements? What positive and negative factors have been at work that made these new religious movements grow and spread so fast?

Some of these factors, of course, are purely social and economic and cultural, such as the crisis-situation that affects all people, cultures, and nations. Others are directly related to the particular forms of the Christian churches and the nature of their mission. The relationship between Christian missions and the new religions is not simply one of cause and effect; it is not merely a one-way street either. The new religions do not arise simply as a reaction to the proclamation of the gospel or the presence of Christian churches, either as a protest or as a corrective to a felt lack. Neither are they only conscious or unconscious attempts to indigenize the Christian church, a result of emphasizing only selected parts of the message of Jesus Christ.

All of these factors, to be sure, are significant aspects of these movements arising out of contact with the established churches and missions. All of these have also greatly contributed to their rapid spread and growth, but the challenge goes deeper. Sometimes charismatic leaders have heard a biblical message that was not--or no longer--present in Christian churches. Often these movements are able to present the gospel of Jesus Christ in such a form that it is, indeed, good news to the millions of people who most desperately need it, but who did not hear it in the context of the established Christian churches and missions.

Each of these movements has its own characteristics, its own peculiar form and development. Though they all emerged from a Christian context, the nature of the relationships between those movements and established churches and missions shows an almost infinite variety. Generalizations are hard to make and will most likely be wrong.

Yet from extensive literature on the subject some general characteristics seem to give these contact-movements a common structure in spite of the large variety in form, content and development. Each of these characteristics presents its own challenge to Christian missions.

1.   The new religious movements arise, grow and spread mostly among the rapidly growing city populations - the uprooted, the alienated, the poor, and the proletarian masses of the industrializing nations. This has been shown for South America; it is true also for Africa, Europe, North America and Asia. The hundreds of new religions arising in Japan--though few of them do so in the backyard of Christian churches-- recruit their members almost exclusively from the lower and the lower middle classes in the sprawling urban centers. The upper and upper middle classes remain almost untouched by these new religions whereas Christianity has found most of its converts and interest among them.

These new religions are thereby succeeding in areas of God's world-wide mission today where the established churches, so far, have failed: the many millions of people now crowded together in the huge metropolitan areas of the world - Tokyo, Manila, Calcutta, Lagos, London, New York, Sao Paulo. The challenge is obvious: Why--and how--do these new religions succeed in areas where Christian missions do not? The answer to this question is important and urgent not only because the large-city population of the world is increasing about twenty times faster than that of the world population in general, but also because of the tragic decimation of Christian churches in urbanized Europe and North America.

If these new religions can succeed in winning the masses of the large metropolitan centers, the often repeated statement that city life and the urban mentality are wholly incompatible with religion stands refuted. This is one of the most encouraging findings of the study of the new religions. Mission leaders are now challenged to take a hard look at their present missionary structures and at their churches' value systems. Both are usually deeply rooted in the rural society of yesteryear, and often they share an anti-city animus. Though no one can deny the difficulties involved in winning large urban populations to Christ, these new religions demonstrate that this mission to cities really starts in our own backyard. Not until churches accept this challenge and move out into the world of the cities will the mission of God be fulfilled.

2.   These new religions take a holistic view of man and of life. In this respect many prophets and other charismatic leaders have heard an aspect of the biblical message that churches and missions coming from the west have long since forgotten. As a document from the Kimbanguist religion expresses it: "Like the gospel itself, this church considers the body to be just as important as the soul; no clear distinction is drawn between the spiritual and the secular, between the spiritual life and social life." This concept, so different from western dualism, makes these new religions much more than doctrinal systems.

They are a way of life, a (sub)culture.

Rather than merely being sacramental bodies, these movements are new social groups that rule and affect every aspect of the believer's life, from education of children to the kind of dress one should wear, the food one may eat, and how to spend one's leisure. They give advice on agriculture, counsel on marriage relations and family life, and, not infrequently, instruct their members on social and political questions.

Because of their social, economic, cultural and political aspects western scholars all too frequently have mistaken them for just that: social protest movements,

economic reform movements, nationalistic movements, liberation movements, etc. In most cases, however, these movements are genuine religious movements with religion at the center of the whole life of the group. Their holistic view of life, however, forbids compartmentalization so characteristic of western thought and practice.

This holistic view also strongly affects these movements' understandings of man's illness and misery and the way man can obtain healing and redemption. Contrary to the western view that separates the healing of the body from the spiritual dimensions of salvation, most of these new religions consider physical illness part of man's whole state of being before God. Body and soul are not two separate entities but inseparable aspects of one and the same person. Rather than looking, therefore, at illness as merely a physical dysfunction, these movements consider it a part of man's whole experience of sin and evil, hatred, injustice, poverty, inequality, oppression, loneliness, unemployment, social disintegration.

Healing comes from God and is therefore a function of religion. This explains not only the tremendous emphasis on healing in all these new religious movements, but also the close relationship between healing and salvation, wholeness and holiness. Healing is a dimension of salvation involving the whole man. Every believer is called to participate in this process. This has serious missionary implications. To these movements, even mission hospitals appear as a horrible form of secularization.

The social and physical and economic consequences of this holistic view of man have been of inestimable help to millions of people who have come into contact with these movements. At a time of cultural confusion, the new religions became a new culture where people found stability and a place to feel at home, especially those most affected by the shocks and stresses of the new age: The uprooted populations, those crowded in the cities, the proletarian masses, the lower classes have found in these religions new identity, new security, new hope, and new meaning to life.

3. These new religious movements are lay-movements. Like the early Christian church they spread because each believer is considered a missionary and a "priest." In Latin America Kardecism, Umbanda-cult, and the Pentecostal movements, though different from each other in many respects, all emphasize "the priesthood of all believers." Over against the traditional teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, these movements stress that each believer can have direct access to the throne of God and his grace without a human mediator.

All believers share equally in the gifts of the Spirit and thereby in his power. It is these gifts that determine a person's status in the new community rather than his family background, wealth or education. In fact, these are considered "mundanismo," worldliness, and therefore must be rejected. This has important social consequences. In the struggles of life the socially downtrodden and the economically powerless endowed with the power of the Spirit stand as a new elite. A compensation mechanism is at work here. At the same time a powerful social protest is sounded that has revolutionary consequences for the two-strata society of Latin America.

The same characteristic is found also in the new religious movements of Africa and Asia. Each person can have power as a result of his own intimate relationship with God and he can share it with others. God is not merely a holy word, an ideal, a power in the background. His presence is real. Ecstatic utterances, dreams, visions, miraculous healings, etc., are the tangible signs of that presence. These are not limited to a chosen few! All believers share equally in these gifts and in the power that goes with them, making for the tremendous vitality of these movements and their missionary growth.

Of special significance in the rise and growth of these new religions as lay movements has been the translation of the Bible into the vernacular and its spread among the people. When believers began to read the Scriptures, certain discrepancies began to appear between what missionaries preached and lived and what African believers felt the Bible was teaching. Certain traditional African values, norms, and even social institutions which missionaries condemned were at times found to be genuinely biblical. In Oceania people often accused the missions of not having taught them all that the Scriptures teach, of having even torn out the first or the last few pages of the Bible. In Africa people rather expressed the feeling that missionaries were giving them a wrong interpretation of the Bible or a truncated form of Christianity selectively chosen according to standards and particular needs prevailing in western culture. The missions were accused of putting their authority over that of the Scriptures.

As happened before in the history of the Christian church and mission, in the hands of believers the Bible now became a powerful incentive to a lay movement. This is especially true in Africa, where not only biblical forms and names and offices and institutions and prescriptions are adopted as essential to the life of the movement, but even certain cosmologies and images and metaphors, based on a rather literalistic-fundamentalistic interpretation of the Scripture.

The challenge to mission is obvious. More than ever before, mission leaders must begin to realize the immense difficulties involved in the transcultural communication of the gospel. Whereas in the past missionaries have seldom been aware of the fact that the Christianity they brought to Africa or Asia bore the imprint of western culture and society, today this insight is making missionaries much more open to the contributions of Latin American, African and Asian believers. May this greater openness also lead to the rediscovery of the biblical concept of the church as the laity, "God's own people, chosen to proclaim the triumps of Him who has led us out of darkness into His marvelous light" (I Peter 2:9).

III

A new day is dawning in relationships between the Christian missions and churches and the new religions. The negative and often hostile attitude missionaries have shown toward these movements in the past is changing to an honest attempt to understand them.

Some independent churches have been accepted as members of Christian councils; a few mission boards are cooperating with new religious movements in the training of their leaders, in theological education and Bible study, and in other projects of common concern. Gone are the days when the study of these new religions was the exclusive domain of the social scientists (anthropologists, sociologists, historians, political scientists, psychologists) and of a few phenomenologists and historians of religion. Some of the finest studies on these movements have come in recent years from missiologists. In 1974 the International Association for Mission Studies (IAMS), at its conference in Frankfurt, Germany, chose as its theme, "Mission and Movements of Innovation," another sign of the new interest on the part of mission leaders in these new religious movements, and of their positive evaluation.

Many factors are contributing to this shift in attitude toward the new religions. In the first place, the movements have become better known than before. Missions have gradually become aware that these movements were not just isolated events but universal phenomena. Though each movement has its own particular ethos and form, there are certain charactersitics common to all. The contributions made by

anthropologists to the understanding of the new religions have received great recognition also in mission circles.

A second factor is the recognition of these movements' many positive contributions to society and to individual believers. Notable among them are the large-scale social and moral reforms they have brought about. They introduce a new morality, often expressed in strict rules against stealing, lying, gambling, or use of alcohol and drugs, and the insistence on modesty, chastity, saving, and other such values. There is emphasis on equality and fellowship, creating a new brotherhood that takes the place of the traditional primary groups. They establish a "third culture," where people find a place to feel at home amidst the conflict between the old and the new.

"Psychological liberation" is provided so that adherents find rest and peace of heart and mind, in spite of anxieties and pressures, shocks and confusion brought about by the crisis-situation in modern times. A new universalism breaks through the traditional particularisms of class, geographical regions, or ethnic groups. New "in-groups," especially in the large urban centers, are formed where people find new identity, new security and new stability. Hope and assurance are found in a time of depression and uncertainty, and a new meaning to life.

As a third factor may be mentioned the missionary success of these movements. They are growing in areas where Christian missions are static or losing ground; they seem to succeed in winning people who are beyond the reach of Christian missions. Mission leaders are beginning to learn from these movements' success and starting to apply these new theological, ecclesiological and methodological insights to the work of mission. Among these insights are: the need for indigenization and contextualization of the Christian mission, fellowship and community as a way of mission, the role of the laity in mission, the wholeness of man and the totality of life, the dynamics of "group-conversion" and the group-oriented approach in mission, the message of hope in clarity and credibility, the role of the Bible (and Christian literature) in mission.

A fourth development bringing about the change of attitude is rooted in the missions' genuine concern to assist the new religions. The many positive contributions of many of these movements should not blind us to the fact that they have also many negative features that stand in need of being corrected. These include: the movements' own selectivity in choosing only part of the whole message of Jesus Christ; a tendency to find in their own culture a source of religious inspiration and criteria for truth; a trend towards exclusivism; a spirit of noncooperation with "outsiders"; an anti-church, anti-mission attitude; overemphasis on the expectation of the coming messiah, which leads to fanaticism, frustration, and a "falling away from the faith" when expectations are not immediately fulfilled; the inability--or unwillingness-- "to distinguish between the spirits"; and an unbiblical syncretism.

As long as churches and missions continue in their negative and hostile attitude towards these movements, no help can be offered that may lead to a correction of these negative aspects. Only when missions and churches recognize their own needs and their own lacks, when they themselves develop humility to learn from the new religious movements, can these movements in turn open themselves to the contributions that Christian missions and individual missionaries may have to offer. This process of mutual sharing has barely begun. But it is an urgent necessity. At stake is the truth as it is found in the whole life and work, message and mission, of Jesus Christ. At stake also is the total liberation of millions of believers and of those who have not yet been reached with the message of salvation. The place to begin such dialogue and common sharing, however, is not in a new institution, not another organization, but rather in the backyard of each church and each religious movement.

Here lies the true test to the credibility of Christian love and the power of the Spirit in a world of unbelief.

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